



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 24.

Price, Five Cents.



"IN ONE MORE MINUTE THE TROUBLE BEGINS," SAID BUFFALO BILL.—(CHAPTER LXIV.)



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No. 24.

NEW YORK, October 26, 1901.

Price Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S VICTORIES.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER LX.

THE BANDIT LOVER.

Swiftly over the rolling, flower-bespangled prairie of southwestern Texas, rode two persons, one balmy evening over a score of years ago, and with flushed faces and sparkling eyes they were apparently enjoying to their heart's content the boundless expanse around them, the scent-laden breeze, the glorious sunset, the rapid motion of their steeds, and occasional glimpses of the winding waters of the Rio Grande, not very far distant ahead of them.

The one was a horseman; the other, a horsewoman.

The former a man of perhaps twenty-five, with a face so darkly bronzed as to appear tinged with Mexican blood, and hair that was black as night, and worn long and waving upon his shoulders.

His companion was a maiden of scarcely seventeen, and evidently no daughter of sunny Mexico, for her eyes were of the deepest blue, fringed by the

longest lashes, her hair golden in hue, and her complexion, though browned by the fiery climate of that land of the far South, was that of a perfect blonde.

Presently, as the sun touched the western horizon, the maiden drew rein, and said:

"Come Senor Ramon, we must return, for soon the prairie will be in total darkness."

"Not so, fair Senorita Rena, the prairie will never become dark while lighted by your presence—and see! yonder rises your rival to guide us homeward," and the horseman pointed to where, in the eastern skies, the full moon was just rising from the horizon, and silvering the rosy hues of the sunset glories.

"You are, as ever, most complimentary, senor; but come, we must return, as my father will be anxious regarding me," replied the maiden very firmly.

"He knows that you are safe with me, and——"

"Ha, ha, senor; a young girl does not always find a protector in a young and handsome man," laughed the young girl, and a dark look swept over her companion's face.

The young man bit his lip as if vexed, and then replied:

"I am wholly at your service, only let us retrace our way by yonder *motte*, for I would water my horse at the spring within its cooling shades."

"As you please," quickly replied the maiden, and the two steeds bounded forward over the prairie, going in the direction of a grove of timber, an acre in size, and about a mile distant.

As the horses sped along, the young man suddenly broke the silence, his face wearing an earnest, anxious look as he said:

"Senorita! Rena! are you aware that your father has given me permission to claim your hand and your heart?"

The face of the maiden became crimson, and she replied with some anger:

"Over my hand, senor, my father has control, I suppose; but over my heart he has not."

"Still, fair Rena, you cannot be blind to the knowledge that I love you devotedly, and I long to make you my beautiful bride?"

"I am aware that you have expressed a deep friendship for me, senor, and friendship alone can exist between us with my consent, for I do not, neither will I ever love you."

"What! am I to be cast aside to suit your idle humor?" angrily replied the horseman.

"Senor Ramon, I have spoken the truth; you will never be more to me than you are now."

"Aha, my lovely senorita, I have your father as my ally, and you will have to yield."

"Is it manliness to gain a wife by force, senor? Is such the creed you learned in your land of Mexico?"

With a muttered imprecation, the man replied:

"Senorita, you have but pronounced your doom."

"I wooed you to win, and your proud head must be lowered."

"Senor Ramon, you shall answer to my father for this insult."

"Both your father and yourself are in my power, girl, for I will throw off the mask I wear as an hon-

orable man, and you shall know me as I am—El Ramon, the chief of the Bandit League of the Rio Grande."

Quick as a flash Rena Alvez felt that the man told the truth, guest of her home though he was.

With sudden impulse her riding whip fell upon the flanks of her spirited horse, which bounded away like the wind, startled and angered by the unexpected lash upon him from his ever-gentle young mistress.

Many thoughts came to Rena Alvez as she fled, telling her that Ramon had spoken the truth, and she felt that she was flying for more than life.

But the man had taken from his pocket a small bugle, and a signal call from it rang over the prairie as he started in rapid pursuit of the girl.

Glancing back the girl saw Ramon in hot pursuit, and also four horsemen dash from the timber near her.

"Oh, Bird, you must save me!" she cried to her straining horse, and the whip fell again and again on her flying horse, and nobly the struggling animal responded, but alas! he had a swift-footed pursuer that he in vain strove to leave behind, for nearer and nearer crept the mustang and his exultant master.

Thus passed mile after mile over the moonlit prairie, the rapid flight and chase startling the wolf from his lair and the buffalo from his wallow.

On, on, good Prairie, Bird, for already the fiery glitter of the mustang's eye can be seen in the moonlight and a mile behind follow a quartette ready to do their master's bidding.

Past a small *motte* the tired and straining animal sped, Rena glancing longingly into the dark recesses as if for succor, and then, with a feeling she could not account for, giving one long, loud cry for help.

Ha! the cry is answered by a shout in the deep, stern tones of a man, and the next instant from the shadow of the timber darts forth the form of a horse and man who rides like the wind to intercept the mustang, so close on the heels of the Prairie Bird.

Instantly the silver bugle touches the lips of El Ramon, and again across the moonlit prairie floats the silvery notes, calling upon his men for their aid.

As the last note dies away the gallant steed of Rena gives a sudden bound, staggers wildly, and with a cry almost human, falls upon the prairie, the last spark of life vanishing with his fall, for his heart had broken in his mighty efforts to save his young mistress.

Though thrown heavily to the ground, Rena was unhurt, and quickly disengaging her skirt, sprang to her feet and turned to behold who it was that had answered her cry for help.

With a feeling of renewed terror, she beheld only a single horseman, and a glance over the prairie showed that he had no followers to aid him. But bravely he dashed forward to meet El Ramon, who had, when Prairie Bird fell, instantly wheeled toward his stranger foe.

As the two horsemen approached each other there were several bright flashes as they fired their pistols, and with a cry of despair Rena beheld the stranger's steed go heavily to the earth, while a loud, derisive laugh came from El Ramon, who the next moment stood over his fallen enemy.

To fly was useless, for nowhere could she go, and with despair clutching at her heart, the brave girl knew not what to do, when the stern voice of El Ramon called to her:

"Here, girl, come and see your would-be preserver."

Slowly she approached the spot, and, arriving there just as the four robber horsemen dashed up, she drew back as they bent their earnest gaze upon her.

All of them were dressed in the picturesque Mexican garb, though of a less costly material than that worn by El Ramon, and their accoutrements were less elegant, while across their shoulders were slung carbines, proving that they were merely common members of the robber band.

Noticing her shrinking movement, El Ramon called out:

"Have no fear, *senorita*; these men have naught to do with you; they are simply cattle to obey my orders; here, do you recognize this gallant who came

to your rescue?" and El Ramon placed his foot upon the body of a man lying upon the prairie.

One glance, and the maiden beheld the handsome form of a young man, clad in the undress uniform of a United States cavalry officer.

"It is Captain Moore; but for God's sake do not tell me that you have killed him," cried Rena, in alarm.

"That I do not know, but shall soon see; his horse is dead, and I shot to kill him, also, for meddling with my affairs. No, he is only stunned, and I fear will cause us trouble," and the chief bent over the prostrate form and half-raised it from the ground, the act displaying a handsome, daring face, with dark wavy hair, and a dark-brown mustache and imperial.

As he was raised from the ground the young officer opened his eyes, passed his hand slowly across his face, and with an effort staggered to his feet, saying, as his glance fell upon El Ramon:

"Ah, *Senor Ramon*, it is to you that I am indebted for my rescue, and—ha! the *Senorita Alvez*?"

"Yes, Captain Moore, and we are both captives to this man whom you believe has befriended you," said Rena, boldly.

The young officer passed his hand again across his forehead, for he was not yet recovered from his fall, and beholding El Ramon present, and recognizing him as one whom he had once met at the hacienda of *Senor Alvez*, he had believed it was by him that he had been rescued from death, for before his fall he had not particularly observed his adversary.

"Say you so, Miss *Alvez*? This man is then a villain," said the officer, attempting to draw a pistol from his belt.

"Concealment is useless now, *Senor Americano*. I am he that is called El Ramon, the chief of the League of the Rio Grande."

"Impossible!" and the officer, as he spoke, placed himself upon the defensive, determined not to submit tamely.

"I speak but the truth, and these are my followers, so you had better submit quietly, as you

seem to have forgotten you fired off your pistols at me.

"See, my men have you in their power," and El Ramon pointed to his four followers who covered the breast of the officer with their carbines."

"You hold the winning hand now. Miss Alvez, we are doomed to at least a short captivity," and the officer turned resignedly toward the maiden, who replied:

"And it was to aid me that you so nearly lost your life, and are now a prisoner to men who I fear will show you little mercy."

"Do not speak of it; it is one of the accidents of war that we must expect, and I certainly did but my duty in coming to your rescue——"

"Which will prove fatal to you, senor," boldly interrupted El Ramon, and then he continued:

"Senorita, you will have to mount behind me, and senor, you will take a seat behind one of my men, and quickly, too, for I like not this neighborhood, with so small an escort."

A few moments were passed in preparations for the start, Rena, though most miserable, feeling less despairing in the presence of her fellow prisoner, for in his courage she had great confidence, and believed he would find some way to release them from their perilous situation.

Raising the maiden easily in his strong arms, El Ramon placed her behind his saddle, and had ordered the officer to mount also, when a stern, deep voice said in their very midst:

"Ho! men, is this lady a captive?"

All present started with amazement, for his approach was unobserved. They beheld a horseman before them, a revolver in each hand threateningly covering El Ramon and his men.

CHAPTER LXI.

BUFFALO BILL ON HAND.

As their eyes fell upon the horseman, who so quietly had ridden into their midst, there arose the cry among the followers of El Ramon of:

"Buffalo Bill! the Border King!"

"Yes, I am he whom men call Buffalo Bill, and if you know aught of me, you are aware that I will not see the helpless oppressed, so away from here and leave this officer and maiden in my keeping."

The voice was strangely deep and stern, and the determined courage of the man, his fearlessly bearding El Ramon and his men, caused Captain Moore and Rena to gaze upon him with interest akin to awe, for his name was well known along the frontier as one who bore a charmed life.

At the sight of him whom men called Buffalo Bill, the Border King, the four Mexicans were taken aback, and their greatest anxiety was to get away; but El Ramon was no coward, and never in his reckless career had he met his equal in strength and desperate courage, so, drawing his knife, for he had discharged his pistols, he cried:

"Hold! Do you dare me?"

"Aye, senor, I dare you, if so you will it," and replacing his revolvers in their holsters Buffalo Bill sprang to the ground, and with two strides was upon his foe, who, with glistening blade sprang forward to meet him.

But with no weapon the scout met the attack, and seizing the uplifted arm of El Ramon wrenched it backward until a cry of pain was wrung from the lips of the chief, who the next instant was hurled bodily to the earth, where he lay momentarily stunned by the fall.

"Back, you hounds!" cried Buffalo Bill, as the four robbers made a movement as if to rush upon him, and instantly his hands held the revolvers taken from his belt, and before his burning eyes the bandits shrunk back, cowed most thoroughly.

"Now, obey me! Two of you mount behind your comrades, and, senor, your horse awaits you," and the remarkable man again turned to El Ramon, who had risen to his feet, and seemed as if about to again attack his formidable foe.

"Cowardly hounds! do you fear one man. At him and beat him down," cried El Ramon, springing forward to be again hurled backward with gigantic

force, while one of the Mexicans who had attempted to aid his chief, fell dead, pierced through the brain by a shot from the scout's pistol.

Another made a motion as if to raise his carbine, and a second sharp report followed, and the Mexican staggered back, a bullet through his heart, while his frightened comrades dropped on their knees and begged for mercy.

"Mount, then, and away, would you have me spare you; and you, sir, tempt not my anger or you may rue it," and the Border King turned to El Ramon, who was again approaching him, apparently with hostile intent.

The robber chief hesitated, a smothered curse escaped his lips, and then, as if feeling the utter uselessness of again facing a man who had proven himself so immeasurably his superior in coolness and strength, he turned, sprang upon his steed, and cried out:

"You hold the advantage now, senior, but we shall meet again."

"Aye, aye; seek me on the prairies, for they are my home; hold! leave those two horses for this gentleman and lady," and the scout turned toward the Mexicans who were about to lead off the two horses of their slain comrades.

With a muttered curse El Ramon drove his spurs into his horse, and followed swiftly away over the moonlit prairie, leaving Captain Moore and Rena rejoiced at their unexpected escape.

"Lady," and the stern manner of the borderman changed to one of courtly ease, "I will at once transfer your saddle to one of these horses, and your friend here can take the other."

"I thank you, sir. Oh, from what have you not saved me, and my father will overwhelm you with gratitude," cried Rena, grasping the hand of her brave preserver.

"And I also owe you a deep debt of gratitude, sir, for my life, I will say, as El Ramon had said my interference would prove fatal."

Moore offered his hand, which the scout grasped warmly, at the same time asking, with some surprise:

"Was yonder handsome fellow El Ramon, the chief of the Bandit League of the Rio Grande?"

"So he proclaimed himself to-night, sir."

"Yes, senior, he has been for weeks the guest of my father, Don Antonio Alvez, and during this afternoon's ride with me he offered his love which I refused, to find out that he was determined to bear me to his stronghold in the Rio Pecos country, when I attempted to escape by flight, and a blast upon his bugle brought those four men to his aid," and Rena shuddered at the remembrance of the fate she had escaped.

"I was crossing the prairie, heard a bugle note and came hither, and just in time," quietly remarked Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, that was the call for his men when I rode out from yonder *motte* where I had sought shelter from what I believed to be Indians, as, coming out only for game, I had but a light shotgun and pistol with me.

"The cry of the Senorita Alvez told me a woman needed succor, and I rode forth, to have my horse shot down and receive a stunning fall, from which I recovered to find myself a prisoner to El Ramon."

"I am glad it has been in my power to serve you both. You are, I believe, an officer of the American cavalry squadron at Tacos?"

"Yes, sir, and it will give me pleasure to welcome you at our quarters, for I have heard much of Buffalo Bill, the army scout."

"Thank you, sir; now we will escort the senorita home, and afterwards I will ride as far as Tacos with you, for thither was I going ere we met."

Aiding Rena to mount, the scout sprang lightly into his saddle, and his example being followed by Malcolm Moore, the three set forth at a rapid gallop across the prairie.

CHAPTER LXII.

BORDERLAND.

It was some ten days before this tragic scene upon the moonlit prairie that Captain Malcolm Moore had

met both Rena Alvez and her father's guest, El Ramon, now known as the bandit chief.

A small squad of cavalry was winding slowly along a prairie trail leading from Fort Inge to the Rio Grande, crossing the river at the small adobe hamlet of Tacos. At the head of the cavalcade, which consisted of an officer and ten troopers, rode Malcolm Moore, the young and handsome captain of cavalry.

Both horses and riders were jaded by a long tramp and most anxious to seek some resting-place for the night, for it was near the hour of sunset.

The trail for the last mile had led through a heavy copse of timber, but suddenly came out upon the open prairie, and a broad expanse of rolling land was visible, here and there dotted with a *motte*, often in that country the home of some wealthy ranchero.

As the last of the squadron filed out upon the prairie, Malcolm Moore suddenly drew rein and bent his eyes earnestly in front of him, toward a *motte* two miles away, for his practiced ear had detected the sounds of distant firing.

A moment after, apparently having made up his mind as to the cause, he cried out:

"Forward, men! there is some devilment going on in yonder *motte*."

Roused to energy by the order of their commander the troopers spurred up their tired steeds, and at a round gallop the party dashed across the plain, the sound of firing growing louder and more rapid as they advanced.

As they approached the *motte* an extensive hacienda was observed concealed within its sheltering shade, and around it was every indication that it was the home of wealth and refinement, for the grounds were tastefully laid out, shrubbery grew here and there, and the adobe mansion was of a superior order to those generally found on the border.

The outbuildings were also of a substantial build, and upon the prairies were thousands of cattle, the property of the master of the hacienda. But hither and thither amid the herds were visible numbers of wild Comanche braves endeavoring to run them off,

while others of the band were laying siege to the mansion, from whence a rapid fire was poured upon them by the inmates.

But the Comanches were in large force, and those who dwelt in the hacienda began to fear that ruin and massacre stared them in the face, when there came three ringing cheers from the troopers, a rattling of scabbards and spurs, a tramping of iron hoofs, and with drawn sabers and cracking revolvers the cavalry were upon the red outlaws, Malcolm Moore far ahead of his men and encouraging them with his stern and ringing voice.

At the welcome sight of the troopers upon the scene, there came a wild cheer from the defenders of the hacienda, and instantly from the flat house-top a more rapid fire poured upon the Comanche band, who, thus surprised and taken at a disadvantage, broke before the rush of the cavalry and scattered in all directions, leaving their dead and wounded upon the field.

"Follow them up, men, or they will run off the horses and herds," cried the young captain, at the same time cutting a huge chief from his saddle with one mighty sweep of his saber, and instantly his men obeyed, while from the hacienda, mounted and ready for action, dashed none other than El Ramon, followed by an elderly, distinguished-looking Mexican cavalier, and a dozen men, the retainers of the estate.

El Ramon, then known as Ruy Ramon, a guest of Don Alvez, and the Don himself quickly joined the troopers, and rapidly pursued the Comanche band who were forced to fly for their lives, leaving their expected plunder and many of their dead behind them.

The chase continued until after dark, and then Don Alvez rode up to Captain Moore and introducing himself, and presenting his friend Don Ramon, begged that the officer and his men would return to the hacienda as his guests.

Tired out with their long ride and severe fighting, Malcolm readily assented, and soon after found himself in a most comfortable room, enjoying a

substantial repast in the presence of Don Alvez, El Ramon, and one of the loveliest maidens it had ever been his fortune to meet.

Thus had Malcolm Moore first met Rena Alvez, and also the man then believed to be a gentleman of Mexico.

Between the young Mexican and the American there was apparently no love lost, for the jealous Don certainly considered that the good-looking Malcolm would become a most dangerous rival, should he fancy Rena.

Thus matters stood ten days previous to the opening scenes in this story, and with a real love pain at his heart Malcolm Moore rode to Tacos, the hamlet where he was to be stationed for some secret service known only to his superior officer, Colonel Van Loo, who, with the remainder of the troops, had not arrived.

Securing comfortable quarters for his commander and brother officers, and not neglecting his men, Malcolm made all in readiness for their arrival, and then set about investigating the history of those he had met at the hacienda, for, strive as he might, he could not banish from his thoughts the lovely face and form of Rena Alvez, who had won from the Indians the name of the "Lily of the Rio Grande," and from the Mexicans that of the "Prairie Rose."

Leaving Tacos one afternoon for a hunt on the prairies for small game, some ten days later, he was as the sun went down, retracing his steps, when suddenly across the prairie he descried what, in the indistinct light, he believed to be Indians, and hastily he sought the cover of a small *motte* to watch their movements, for he was not well prepared for a fight, having brought with him but one revolver and his shotgun, for he had not intended going far from Tacos, and was surprised when he found he had wandered miles away.

The result of Malcom's discovery, his rushing out to the aid of Rena, his capture by El Ramon, and release by Buffalo Bill is known.

CHAPTER LXIII.

HOW IT PROVED A DOUBLE RESCUE.

After a wait, with his mere handful of troopers, of a few weeks at the new military post of Tacos, a scout arrived with notice of the near approach of the colonel and the rest of the force.

With flourishing of trumpets the command appeared over a swell of the prairie, and Captain Malcolm and his half-a-score of troopers rode forth to meet their comrades.

It was rather a formidable show of military to send upon the frontier at that time, and many were the surmises among the natives as to what it all could mean, and whether another invasion of Mexican territory was intended by the United States. First came Colonel Edwin Van Loo, an old veteran who had grown gray in his harness, and who had lost his left arm upon the field of Buena Vista, and in early life seen desperate service upon that wild frontier, where Americans were looked upon as envoys of the devil himself.

Stern, grim, soldierly, and every inch a man, Colonel Van Loo led his troopers, and with a cheery smile greeted Malcolm Moore, who was a particular favorite with the old officer.

Then followed a score of horsemen, an adjutant and staff officer, half-a-dozen couriers, and a dozen buckskin-dressed fellows, the guides and scouts of the command.

Behind these came half-a-hundred bold troopers, followed by two field pieces of artillery, caissons, and a dozen wagons, while bringing up the rear were two-score more of cavalry.

"Well, Malcolm, my boy, I am glad to see you, and I trust you have our quarters ready," cried the old colonel, extending his one hand to the young captain.

"Indeed, I have sir, and a few bottles of the finest Aquadiente in your cupboard awaiting to be sampled."

"Good boy! and by the way, you are most modest

regarding your brilliant achievement of a few days since."

"To what do you refer, colonel?" innocently asked Malcolm, as the two rode along together.

"Why, you are innocence itself, you sly dog; but I understand, you wish to keep the bright eyes of the senorita from view," and the colonel enjoyed a hearty laugh.

"Ah! you mean my little affair with the Comanches?"

"Aha! your little affair with the Comanches; why, boy, you had but ten troopers, and the natives tell me that some twenty Indians were left on the field, and without the loss of a soldier."

"Had I lost any of my men, I should have at once sent a courier, reporting the skirmish to you, sir."

"The devil you would; why, there was one heavy loss you did not report——"

"And that was, sir?" asked Malcolm, with surprise.

"Your heart, boy," and the colonel greatly enjoyed Malcolm's confusion; but soon he continued:

"I know all about the fight, captain, having heard of it as we came along, and I stopped at the hacienda for lunch to-day and was entertained like a prince by that beautiful girl, who told me her father was absent, hunting on the prairies with a guest; and, Malcolm, the face of that young girl recalls to my heart bitter trials and sorrows it has known, and—but, no, some day, my boy, I may tell you all, but not now.

"You say Tacos is going to be a dull place to quarter in?"

"I think so, sir."

"Well, we will make it lively, for the work before us is no child's play, I assure you."

By nightfall the command was all in quarters, and the camp under perfect discipline, and Malcolm Moore determined to start out the next day and hunt down some game for the colonel, who was very fond of high living.

As he rode along over the prairie the young officer thought over in his own mind all that he had heard of Don Alvez and his lovely daughter, for the gossips had informed him that the don had come to Texas some ten years before and had settled upon the hacienda where he then lived.

His wife they had never seen, and believed she was dead, but Rosa was beloved by all who knew her.

That the don was immensely wealthy, held himself aloof from all intercourse with the other settlers, and seemed to live for himself and daughter alone, was also known; and, though living in an American country, he seemed to hate all Americans, was also reported of him, as it was, too, that he had frequent visitors at his hacienda who were known to be Mexican officers high in authority.

As to Don Ramon, the people could tell Malcolm nothing positive, though some said he was an American raised in Mexico, and others that he was a rich Mexican intending to settle in Texas, while, furthermore, it was stated that he was a Mexican colonel of lancers.

Which report to believe Malcolm did not know, but certain he was that the dashing and handsome Mexican was a most dangerous rival in the field of love.

"I would that I could win her," he murmured, "and take her to my plantation home on the Mississippi, for my parents and sister would warmly welcome her, Mexican though she is.

"Next week Colonel Van Loo's daughter is coming to cheer our camp life with her presence, and I know the good old fellow has determined I shall marry her, for he has told me so a dozen times.

"Ah, me! I wish I had met her before I saw Rena; or that she was Rena, or Rena was Lola Van Loo."

Thus thinking aloud, Malcolm Moore wandered hither and thither over the prairies, the game rising at his very feet, and he unconscious of their existence, until at last, with a half laugh at his infatuation, he devoted himself to the sport he had started upon, and soon had his game bag filled with birds.

It was a short half hour after, when retracing his way to the fort, that Malcolm Moore heard that piercing cry for help in a woman's voice.

He saw only shadowy forms drawing near in the moonlight, knew not who or what he was to meet, but answered the cry, as has been seen, to, within a few minutes, find both Rena Alvez and himself at the mercy of the false friend, El Ramon.

Then came Buffalo Bill upon the scene.

CHAPTER LXIV.

BUFFALO BILL'S DEADLY WORK.

If El Ramon and his companions were greatly struck at the appearance and wonderful coolness of

the remarkable man who had, single-handed, compelled them to submit to his will, Malcolm and Rena were none the less so, and as they rode across the prairie they felt a certain awe in his presence that it was impossible to shake off.

Both the officer and maiden had heard of Buffalo Bill, the captain again and again, as a man who lived upon the prairies, and constantly upon the trail of the hostile Indians, who feared his very name.

And many were the rumors of his wonderful strength, his reckless courage, and his deadly aim with his repeating rifle and revolvers, weapons then little known upon the border.

Who the strange scout was few then knew, and many were the rumors regarding his early life; but certain it was that he was an American, a man of striking personal attractions, and one whose Indian cunning, skill as a prairieman, and desperate encounters with the Indians and renegades who infested the frontier had gained for him the appellation of the Border King, a name by which he was known along the Rio Grande and in the far Northwest.

Seldom seen in the towns and villages, and then only to purchase supplies and ammunition, he was an object of admiration and wonder whenever he did appear, and many were those who sought his acquaintance, to be politely but firmly repelled.

Upon his arrival in Tacos, Malcolm found the people wild over some reckless achievement of Buffalo Bill, who alone had gone into the Comanche country and rescued from them a young girl they had carried into captivity during their last raid.

It was a mere child he had wrested from the power of the redskins, and one in whom he had only felt a humane interest, and loud were the laudations he received, when the young girl told her simple story of how the daring man had secretly crept into the Indian camp by night, and taken her from the wigwam where she was sleeping, but not without raising an alarm, which caused the death of a number of red warriors ere the scout could reach his noble steed, and, with the maiden in his arms, distance all of his pursuers.

Knowing that the duty that had brought him to the Rio Grande was one of danger, Malcolm had therefore been most anxious to secure the valuable services of this noted scout, and congratulated him-

self upon the lucky accident that had brought him across his path.

After riding along for a short distance, Malcolm explained to the Border King that he was the officer of cavalry then at Tacos, and that he had been most anxious to meet him.

"And my destination was Tacos, to communicate with the commanding officer, Captain Moore," mildly responded the Border King.

"I am glad to hear it, and after the service you have done this night, I am certain you shall never regret our meeting.

"I have heard of you often from officers who have served up in the Northwest; Mr. Cody, for I have never been there, and I did not know that your field of duty ever extended to the Rio Grande, until I learned you were here and wished to meet you.

"The way in which my wish was granted, believe me, I appreciate."

"And I shall never forget," earnestly said Rena.

"My field of scouting is on the Northwest frontier, Captain Moore; but I am an army scout, hence subject to be sent anywhere, and duty brought me here—ah!"

"Do you see anything in that direction?" and the young officer gazed earnestly across the prairie, for the scout had halted and was eagerly looking far off over the rolling plain.

Drawing rein, both Malcolm and Rena first looked in the direction in which Buffalo Bill was gazing, but unable to see anything there other than the rolling prairie, they turned their eyes upon him and narrowly watched his movements.

"Yes, I see a band of horsemen," coolly remarked the scout, after a while, and then he continued:

"But whether some of El Ramon's band, or Indians, I will soon know."

Taking from his saddle-pocket an army fieldglass, he turned it in the direction in which he had been looking, and then said slowly:

"They are Indians, Comanches, and about twenty in number, evidently the scouts of a large party on a raid; and we are discovered and must ride for it—come."

Away darted the horses across the prairie in the direction of the hacienda of Don Alvez; but ere they had gone half a mile it was evident that the animals ridden by Malcolm and Rena, and which had belonged to the bandits, had been broken down by

their long chase after Prairie Bird, and were rapidly being overhauled by the Indian horses, which seemed comparatively fresh.

"The hacienda is yet three miles distant, and these horses cannot hold out at this pace, so I must check those redskins," coolly said Buffalo Bill.

"And how, can I ask?" said Malcolm.

"I will show you; they are now half a mile only from us, and in fifteen minutes will greatly lessen that distance.

"As we ride now, from them, they cannot tell whether we are two or three in number, and hence I will dash on ahead, drop down with my horse in the grass, and you and the senorita continue right on past me, and make for the hacienda with all the speed you can get out of those nags.

"In case some of the party should push on after you, try the strength of your lungs as soon as you come in hailing distance, so as to warn the inmates of the hacienda to be prepared for the attack."

"And what will you do, scout?" asked Malcolm Moore.

"I will lie low in the grass until those fellows get in close rifle range, and then surprise them with a shot or two."

"And you expect me to desert you and leave you, who can easily escape, to stay behind and fight our battles?" indignantly said Captain Moore.

"Captain Moore, keep cool; if you were well armed and we were alone, we would fight it out; but, as it is, you have only a small fowling piece hanging to your saddle, and besides your duty is to bear the senorita on out of danger.

"As for myself, my rifle and revolvers will make those redskins think there's a dozen of me, and my good horse, Red Ranger here, can distance any hoof on these plains and not half try.

"You will please do as I say, and if the hacienda is attacked, you will find me somewhere in the neighborhood."

Malcolm Moore saw the truth of the advice of the scout, and at once acquiesced, and with a word to Red Ranger Buffalo Bill drew rapidly ahead, keeping the officer and maiden between him and the Indians, who were coming swiftly on, hardly a quarter of a mile away.

Suddenly Rena uttered a cry, half of terror, half of surprise, as she beheld the Red Ranger and his rider go down in the grass, but as they passed by the next

moment, she discovered the noble steed lying at full length on the prairie, and crouching behind him, his rifle ready for action, was the majestic form of the Border King.

"Push on with all haste, for I may not check all those fellows," cried the scout, and with a friendly wave of his hand to the daring man, Malcolm and Rena pressed on, urging their horses to their greatest speed.

Interested in the strategy of Buffalo Bill, both the officer and maiden kept their eyes turned behind them, and with dread Malcolm saw that the redskins were pressing dangerously near upon the ambushed scout, and feared that some accident to himself or steed might prevent his escaping after he had delivered his deadly fire.

And silent as death lay the scout and his horse, the daring man's rifle leveled across the back of the well-trained animal, while the Indians came on with a rush that seemed irresistible.

"In a minute more the trouble will begin," grimly said Buffalo Bill.

But suddenly, when the officer and maiden felt that the Border King would be ridden down, there burst forth from low on the prairie flash after flash of fire, and rapidly the rattling cracks of his repeating rifle rang forth its deadly music, to which the startled yells, and dying warcries of the Comanches played an accompaniment.

Instantly the band of Indians was thrown into the utmost disorder, for several of their number lay dead on the prairie, and then far and wide pierced the fearful warcry of Buffalo Bill, and the braves checked their rapid flight and quickly wheeled to the right-about.

Then from the grass arose the daring rider and his steed and springing into his saddle, a revolver in each hand, he gave chase, and crack after crack was heard, flash after flash was seen, as he rushed like a great giant of battle after the flying and frightened Indians, who seemed to fear they had encountered some demon of the prairie.

Finding that their pursuers had suddenly become the pursued, Malcolm and Rena slightly checked the speed of their horses, but still continued on a rapid gallop, until, as the hacienda walls loomed up before them, they heard a quick hoof-stroke behind them, and up dashed the borderman, his face cold and stern in the moonlight, and a bunch of gory

scalps held out at arm's length, the trophies of his single-handed combat with a score of the red warriors of the plains.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE WARNING.

A short ride further, and Buffalo Bill and his companions dashed up to the hacienda gate, just as Don Alvez appeared in dire alarm, for he had heard the firing upon the prairie, and the continued absence of Rena filled his heart with dread for her safety.

With a cry of delight, he welcomed Rena home, and when, in a few words, she quickly told him of her remarkable adventures, the perfidy of his guest, El Ramon, and the services rendered her by Malcolm Moore and Buffalo Bill, the Mexican seemed overwhelmed with astonishment.

As first he appeared hardly to know what to say or do, but at last said in earnest tones:

"Rena, you say that El Ramon rode across the prairie, accompanied by his two men?"

"Yes, father; but what matters in which way that vile man went, when here stand my brave preservers awaiting your reception?" and Rena spoke in a voice which quickly recalled her father to his duty of gratitude and hospitality, and in warm terms he turned and greeted the scout and the young officer, at the same time gazing upon the renowned Indian hunter with a look which it was hard to fathom.

"Senor, you are welcome to my hacienda, and I assure you my words cannot express my thanks for the service done me in the return of my daughter, and——"

"Hark!"

It was the deep voice of the scout that had broken in upon the thanks of the don, and all listened in silence, and distinctly the rapid fall of hoofs reached their ears.

"Some herdsman returning," said Don Alvez, with evident uneasiness, and he urged his guests to enter the hacienda.

"No; that is no herdsman's horse; his footfall is too light," replied the scout, and he rode to the gateway and eagerly scanned the prairie until his gaze fell upon the form of horse and rider rapidly approaching.

A short while more and there dashed up a small, wiry iron-gray, and upon his back was an Indian maiden, as the bright moonlight plainly revealed.

"Ha! it is the Song Bird of the Comanches," said Buffalo Bill, gazing intently upon her, as reining up her steed, and raising her hand in warning, she cried out in good English:

"Let the palefaces of the border be ready, for, like the leaves of the forest, the Comanche and Apache warriors are on the warpath to-day to lay in ruin their fair homes.

"The Song Bird has spoken, let the palefaces heed her warning."

Wheeling her horse, the Indian maiden was about to dash away, when the deep voice of Buffalo Bill restrained her, as he said in her own language:

"Why does the Song Bird fly from her home and her people to warn the palefaces of danger?"

The iron-gray steed was reined back suddenly upon his haunches, and horse and rider were a study for an artist, the Indian girl scarcely more than sixteen, with an abundance of dark, flowing hair, and face and form of wondrous beauty, the hue of the skin being less brown than was the nature of her race, while her features were most un-Indian like.

Dressed in a suit of richly-worked buckskin, short skirt, leggings and moccasins, she wore upon her head a coronet of gayly-dyed plumes, and her wrists and arms above the elbows were encased with heavy gold bands, while from her shoulders hung a beautiful Mexican serape of many colors.

The bridle and trappings of her horse were also of buckskin, handsomely embroidered with beads and quills, and altogether she was a splendid specimen of the wild maiden of the prairies, one who feared nothing in the world, was a true friend and deadly foe.

The voice of Buffalo Bill, addressing the maiden in her own tongue, appeared to momentarily startle her, and it was then that she reined back her horse and bent her gaze full upon him with a look of admiration and awe.

"It is the great enemy of the Comanches that speaks to the Song Bird, and he should know that her heart is not evil, that she loves the palefaces, and the great spirit of her race has told her to warn them of danger."

"The Song Bird sings sweetly, for her heart is pure. Whither would she turn her horse now?"

"She would fly down the great river to tell the palefaces of danger," promptly replied the young girl.

"The Song Bird is a brave maiden, and her words are music to the paleface ears, but the warriors who guard the wigwams of the palefaces never sleep, and already are they preparing for the warpath.

"See, the Comanches have this night met the palefaces," and the scout held up his string of fresh scalps.

Song Bird, as her people called her, half shuddered at the sight, bowed her head as though in honor to the border chief, and said softly:

"The great chief of the Comanches will tremble when he meets the brave paleface. The Song Bird will fly back to her people."

With a wave of the hand and a word to her horse, she was away like a shooting star, the iron-gray carrying her across the moonlit prairie at a speed rivaling the arrow's flight.

"Yonder maiden is a mystery too deep for me to solve, for she holds a wonderful power over her tribe, and time and again has prevented them from cruelties.

"Now that they are leagued with the Apaches in a grand raid, it is beyond her power to check them, and secretly she has flown hither to warn the settlements, though well she knows her life will be the forfeit if she is discovered," and Buffalo Bill still gazed in the direction in which the Song Bird had disappeared.

"May Heaven protect her from harm," devoutly ejaculated Rena, and then she turned to the scout and Malcolm Moore, urging them to enter the hacienda and rest.

Gladly would the young officer have done so, for he longed to still linger in the presence of the lovely Rena, but the scout said firmly:

"No, senorita, we must on to Tacos, and gather brave defenders to guard those silken locks from the red grasp of the Comanche. Thanks, senorita, but we must away.

"*Buenos noches,*" and, raising his plumed sombrero to Rena and the don, who appeared in a most preoccupied mood, he was riding away followed by Captain Moore, who had warmly clasped the maiden's hand, when the fair girl called out:

"Hold! Senor Americano, you must accept a fresh horse, for the one you ride is useless—quick, Pedro, away and bring the best steed in my father's stables."

The don did not second the order, still standing

in moody silence, and Malcolm would have declined the kind offer, but Buffalo Bill said firmly:

"The senorita is right; the horse you bestride is used up."

The next moment Pedro returned with a gaunt, well-limbed sorrel that showed both speed and bottom in his build, and the saddle and bridle were quickly transferred to his back.

Then, with another warm pressure of the hand, Captain Moore mounted and followed the scout from the plaza of the hacienda, and at a rapid pace the two started for Tacos, the young officer more and more impressed with his companion, who rode by his side, seldom volunteering a remark, and yet not disagreeably taciturn in his manner.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE "PRAIRIE MEN" ESCORT.

Upon the morning following the incidents related in the foregoing chapter, a wagon train was slowly winding over the grass-grown prairies, at a distance of some forty miles from the hamlet of Tacos on the Rio Grande.

The train consisted of some twenty wagons, and one ambulance, the latter drawn by four large army mules, while there were some dozen or more horsemen riding in advance, a gay and hardy set of men, the Santa Fe Traders, or "Prairiemen," as they preferred to be called, rather than the name of trader, which to them smacked too much of dollars and cents.

And a wild, jovial set they were; men who had, many of them, belonged to the best families in the land, and whom love of adventure had brought to the frontier, where their days and nights were passed in the dangers that beset their life of prairie traffic, far from the marts of civilization, through an almost unbroken and savage land, to the far depot of Santa Fe, in New Mexico, they were forced to carry their goods, and constantly guard them against the red men of the plains and the outlawed paleface who lived by the plunder of his fellow men.

And brave, daring fellows were these prairiemen, ever ready to grant a favor or resent an injury, to join an Indian battle, and aid the helpless.

The leader of this gay set was a man of perhaps thirty, a handsome, daring, free-and-easy fellow who had cast behind him years before the advantages of

a collegiate education, and, after an affair of honor with one who had been his best friend, until a pair of blue eyes made them rivals, he had fled the country, leaving behind him a headstone in the village church-yard to mark where lay the remains of that once loved friend, and the pair of blue eyes to grow dim with weeping, and waiting for one whom she had loved, and yet had cast aside in a fickle humor of coquetry.

Hailing to the name of Dare Dudley, he was better known on the border as Wild Dare, for many were the gay revels in which he had been the wildest of the wild, and it is only natural on the prairie to bestow a nick-name upon a man, especially one at all prominent, and it was well known that no fandango, prairie hunt, daring attack, or deadly fray was complete without Dare Dudley, "the captain," as his men called him, at its head.

Another prominent prairieman in the little party was a young man of twenty-eight, possessing a splendid physique, and what would have been a handsome face had it not been marred by a look of cruelty and dissipation.

Like his comrades, he was dressed in a handsome suit of buckskin, wore a soft slouch hat, rode a fine horse, and was armed with a knife, rifle and a pair of revolvers.

Of this man, Hugh Haywood he called himself, little else was known than that he had joined the prairiemen at New Orleans, was lavish with his money, had two wagons filled with goods, and was noted a square fellow by all, excepting Wild Dare, who never had fancied him.

In the train was another person who is to figure prominently in this story as a heroine, for it is not a prairieman, but a woman.

Yes, a violet-eyed, velvet-cheeked maiden of nineteen, with a beautifully rounded form, and a face of rare loveliness, shaded as it was by masses of golden-brown curls.

Her form was attired in a close-fitting suit of dark gray, that answered the purpose of both traveling dress and riding habit, for a led horse behind the ambulance proved she was also a horsewoman.

Upon her head was a soft felt hat, pinned up on one side with a pair of miniature gold cavalry sabers. Reclining indolently in the ambulance, which had been fitted up for her especial use and comfort, the maiden was listening to the conversation of Wild

Dare, who rode by the side of the vehicle, as was often his wont to do, devoting his leisure time to his fair charge, for under his care had the young girl and her maid, a Peon woman of forty, in whose face yet remained traces of former beauty, been placed by Judge Van Loo, the brother of the colonel, then on the Rio Grande.

With her gallant old father, Lola's will was law, and when, after her school days in New Orleans, she desired to visit the border, and cheer the hours of her parent in camp, he could but consent, and at once dispatched his own ambulance to the city to meet her, and as her uncle, the judge, well knew the upright character of Dare Dudley, he had placed his niece under his charge, confident that she would be protected from every danger during her perilous and arduous journey, and Lola greatly preferred the companionship of the dashing prairiemen to that of the emigrants, who were to soon follow the Star of Empire westward, and with which train it had been her original intention to start, according to her father's wishes.

At first charmed with the beauty and refinement of his fair charge, Wild Dare soon learned to love her with all the devotion of his ardent nature, but yet he was never obtrusive, and refrained from forcing his attentions upon her, while with Hugh Haywood it was different, as he appeared to fall in love with Lola at first sight, and from that moment sought her society upon every pretext, greatly to the annoyance of Captain Dudley, who saw in him a dangerous rival, for the stranger prairieman was a brilliant fellow, and had evidently mingled much in the society of lovely and accomplished women.

Whether Lola really cared for him, or for Hugh Haywood, Wild Dare was unable to tell, but he closely watched every movement of his rival, to see if any extra exultation on his part would show that the maiden had given him any hope.

Thus matters stood on that morning when the train of the prairiemen was winding over the plains, not very many miles from the destination of fair Lola, and a sad look hovered upon Wild Dare's face, as he felt that in another day he must part, perhaps forever from his fair charge.

Suddenly the train halted, and over a roll in the prairie appeared a single horseman boldly relieved against the clear sky, and the noble appearance of

both horse and rider attracted the admiring glance of all.

"Who can he be?"

"What does he want?"

"What a splendid-looking fellow!"

Such were the expressions that went from lip to lip, as, not three hundred yards distant, the horseman still remained, quietly gazing upon the advancing train.

"Who is he, Lone Dick?" suddenly called out Wild Dare of his guide, a young plainsman who had long dwelt upon the plains, and who had remarked when he caught sight of the horseman:

"I guess as what I knows him, or I'm a redskin."

"Who is he, Lone Dick?" again said Wild Dare.

"Wall, I tell you, captain, if my eyesight don't deceive me, and I guesses I ain't blind, if I has lived nigh on to thirty year, that fellow yonder is one who is just the boss of the border, and he's a terror to boot, you bet."

"But who is he, Dick?"

"Have you ever hearn tell on Buffalo Bill, the Border King, captain?"

"Indeed, I have, many a time."

"Wall, yonder fellow is the man."

CHAPTER LXVII.

AN INSULT AND ITS PUNISHMENT.

The words of Lone Dick created the greatest excitement among the members of the train, for all had heard of the renowned scout, and yet the guide seemed the only one that had before met him, for Wild Dare in his former trips took the trail to Santa Fe farther to the westward and not through the El Paso country.

But Buffalo Bill gave the prairiemen little time for comment, as, having satisfied himself as to the character of the train, he came toward them in a long, sweeping gallop that soon brought him into their midst.

Reining his horse back suddenly, and at sight of Lola Van Loo raising his sombrero with a respectful bow, he said in his deep, quiet tones:

"I would see the captain of this train."

"I hail to that appellation, sir; my name is Dare Dudley, and I am glad to welcome the famous scout, Buffalo Bill, into my train," and Wild Dare stepped forward and warmly grasped the hand of the scout, who replied:

"I have often heard of you, Captain Dudley, and I have now come to warn you of danger ahead."

"Indeed! in what shape comes this danger?"

"In the first place, sir, the Comanches and Apaches are leagued together and are raiding upon the haciendas and settlements around Tacos, while El Ramon and his bandits are taking advantage of this move to lie in wait for your train, which is reported a rich one."

"The report is correct; it is an exceedingly rich train, and El Ramon and his cutthroats will find a rich time taking it; but what is the force of this League of the Rio Grande?"

"They number sixty men, and are well mounted and armed."

"That is bad, for we hardly have half that number of fighting men."

"You are sure, scout, that El Ramon is waiting for us, and not like the Indians raiding on the settlements?"

"I was in his camp just before daylight, Captain Dudley, and learned his plans; he is now ambushed in the timber lands through which the trail leads ten miles from here."

"Scout Cody, your kindness I can never forget, and——"

"Pardon me, captain, I have but done my duty, but can I ask if you have seen an emigrant and army supply train coming west? You travel more rapidly and may have passed them."

"If you refer to the quartermaster's train for Tacos, it was detained in starting, and is now fully ten days behind me."

"I am glad to hear it, for Colonel Van Loo——"

"Tell me, sir, have you seen my father?" earnestly cried Lola, when hearing her parent's name spoken.

Buffalo Bill turned quickly, his whole face changed its expression, as bowing low he replied in strangely soft tones for his stern voice:

"If I address Miss Van Loo, I parted with her father after midnight the past night."

"And he was well; tell me about him?"

"He was well, lady; and fearing that the train by which you were expected might be nearer than he anticipated, he begged me to meet it, and turn it off the present trail into the one to the south."

"Indeed, I thank you, sir; but I taxed the kindness of Captain Dudley, and came on with him," and Lola Van Loo gazed, with an admiration she could

not conceal, into the strangely handsome, fascinating face of the scout, who flushed slightly under her earnest glance.

"Then you would advise that we take the southern trail, scout, and not risk the chance of an engagement with this El Ramon?" said Captain Dudley, with some anxiety in his tones.

"It is not a chance, sir, but a certainty; if you fail to take the trail to the south you will be assuredly attacked by the League of the Rio Grande."

"Lone Dick, are you acquainted to the south of this?" and Wild Dare turned to his guide.

"Well, I ain't, kase you see, captain, I don't go thar oftin."

"I will guide you, sir, as the other train I was to warn is too far back to be in danger."

"And I accept your offer, sir," quickly said Wild Dare.

"Hold! Captain Dudley, do you believe the report of this impostor?"

All present started as Hugh Haywood stepped forward with his bold assertion against Buffalo Bill, and, though surprised, Wild Dare said:

"He is certainly known as an honorable man, and assuredly I believe him."

"You do so then at your peril, for he would lead you into an ambush, I am assured," and Hugh Haywood spoke with one hand upon his revolver and an evil light in his eye.

Quickly the scout dismounted, his manner cool, but decided, and suddenly stood before his accuser.

"Do you address your charge against me, sir?"

Hugh Haywood was a ready hand with his weapons, and he attempted to draw a revolver ere he replied; but the movement, quick as it was, was frustrated by the rapidity of action of Buffalo Bill, who dashed his arm forward with a muscular force that was irresistible, striking the prairieman upon the neck, right on the jugular vein.

Back into the air and down upon the prairie went Hugh Haywood, stunned and senseless from the fearful shock.

At the bold act of the borderman, half-a-dozen prairiemen drew their revolvers and quickly stepped forward, when facing them with determined manner, the scout said, in his stern, menacing tones:

"Back, men, and don't crowd me, for I will neither be insulted nor bullied."

"Scout Cody is right; he came to warn us of

danger, and Hugh Haywood insulted him; back, boys, and put up your weapons," and Wild Dare spoke sternly, and as his comrades willingly obeyed, he added:

"By Heaven! I believe you have killed him."

"Ah, no; he is worth a dozen dead men yet; a little water in his face and a drink of brandy will fetch him all right," and Buffalo Bill coolly walked aside with Wild Dare, while the negro who drove Lola's ambulance said with a chuckle:

"Fore Heaven, missy, dat white man 'tink a mule kick him, I guesses, when he git up agin. Golly, but dat gemman in buckskin am boss of de prairie, dat's sartin."

Lola evidently agreed with colored Toby, but made no reply, as she gazed upon the majestic form of the scout, standing quietly beside his horse and listening to the earnest conversation of Wild Dare, while Lone Dick, with a knowing look upon his face and a twinkle of fun in his small eyes, said to one of the prairiemen, while he pointed to Hugh Haywood, who was slowly recovering consciousness:

"I guesses as what yonder game-cock has had his comb clipped in a manner he little expected."

"Jerusalem! but that scout feller is a trump, and lightning don't git round quicker than he kin, cause he just upset t'other rooster when he had the dead wood on him with his shootin' iron; my stars, won't thar be fun when Hugh Haywood gits all right again; I guess the feathers will fly round purty lively like, and I'll bet a nigger against a Mexican greaser that thar will be cold meat around here afore long, and calkerlate it won't be yonder boss talkin' to the captain."

Thus speaking, Lone Dick lighted his pipe and seated himself on the ground to calmly await results, perfectly indifferent to whether it would be peace or war, for Lone Dick had been witness and participant in too many desperate scenes to feel anxiety about a fracas in a prairie train.

The result of the secret conference between Wild Dare and Buffalo Bill was that orders were given to move on, but taking a trail turning short off to the south, instead of the one they had been following.

As for Hugh Haywood, he soon recovered consciousness, and with swimming head and bloodshot eyes arose to his feet; but not to rush upon the scout, as his comrades expected.

No, his manner was subdued, and he seemed to bide his time for a meeting with the scout, for that he would drop the affair as it was none believed.

When the order came to move upon the other trail, Hugh Haywood advanced toward the captain and said:

"Wild Dare, you may continue on, if you so desire, by the advice of yonder scout; but I am free to do as I please, and shall at once withdraw my wagons and drivers from the train and keep our former trail."

"Hold on, Haywood, and do not do anything so rash, for I am convinced that Scout Cody speaks the truth.

"You are angry now, so do not let it lead you into ruin."

Wild Dare spoke kindly, and the remainder of the prairiemen begged Haywood to change his resolution, but he was determined, and in a short time mounted his horse, and, followed by his two wagons and the drivers, he departed on his way, and was soon lost to sight over a roll in the prairie.

"Captain Dudley, I dislike to think ill of any man; but I feel assured that yonder deserter from your ranks knows more about the League of the Rio Grande than any of us."

"Ha! say you so, scout?"

"Yes; if he feared El Ramon he would not venture on alone as he does."

"If I thought so, I would soon overhaul him and——"

"You could gain no information by so doing; now let us proceed, for we have no time to lose," and, mounting his faithful bay, the scout placed himself at the head of the train, which at once moved on more rapidly than it had before done on the march.

At length the sun cast long fantastic shadows across the prairie, and the tired animals needed rest, so that a halt was called, and upon the banks of a small stream, thickly grown with bushes, the train went into camp, the scout advising a rest of several hours, and then a continuance of the journey by night.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE ATTACK.

Midnight came, and again the train was ready for the move, when suddenly Buffalo Bill dashed up, for

he had gone forth upon the prairie an hour before, and cried out in ringing tones:

"Form a corral, men, with your wagons; lively, lively, for the League is upon us."

The stern order sent every man to his post, and, cool and determined, a crescent was formed of the wagons, each end resting upon the stream banks, and rapidly shovels were in use throwing up earthworks against the wagon wheels, while the mules and horses were brought into the half-circle, and every preparation for defense made, for the prairiemen were no new hands at such work.

Finding a small ravine in the banks of the stream, the scout quickly made it a comfortable and safe retreat for Lola and her maid, and with the courtly grace of a man of the world, escorted her there quietly.

"Here you will be in no danger from their firing, Miss Van Loo."

"True; but while I am hidden from danger, you brave men must face all," earnestly responded Lola.

"It is man's part in life, Miss Van Loo, to risk all for those who are dear to him; I hope you will be safe, and that we can soon bring you a good report; farewell."

Raising his sombrero, he turned away, and a few moments after Toby, the driver, arrived with the news.

"Dat scout man am got on de top of his hoss and gone out agin to find what dem willins is about, missy."

"Did he go alone, Toby?"

"Yes, missy, alone by hisself, after tellin' Captain Dudley he would give a whoop when de devils was comin'."

"Well, Toby, you go out and see if Captain Dudley cannot give you a place to defend, or be ready to bring Marrita and myself the rifles and pistols to load as fast as they are discharged."

"I think I better stay here, missy, to take care o' you, for yer fader tole me not to leab you under no carcumstance, and I likes to 'bey his orders."

Lola smiled, and was about to make some remark not very flattering to Toby's courage, when there came a wild and prolonged war cry, some few hundred yards away, followed by a volley of rifle shots and then by the steady and rapid crack of a repeating rifle.

"God in heaven protect him; he is attacked—perhaps killed," she cried, fervently.

"Not as long as his rifle speaks out as it does, Miss Lola; hark! how his revolvers ring out their music.

"Truly, that man is the King of Bordermen," and Wild Dare hesitated a moment by Lola's side, for he had come to tell her to have no fear.

Ere she could reply there came another volley of rifle shots, nearer and louder than before, and again the wild war cry of the daring scout.

In haste Wild Dare sprang to his post, and his brave voice was heard:

"Steady, men! take example after yonder bold fellow; ha! here he comes—three cheers, boys, for Buffalo Bill!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" rang forth the cheer, and just then the scout dashed up, and entered the barricade, saying quietly:

"Yonder come your foes, comrades; throw no shot away."

As the plainsman spoke there was visible in the moonlight a compressed mass of horsemen rushing pell mell upon the train, shouting, yelling and firing their rifles and revolvers in rapid succession.

But the prairiemen met them coolly and calmly, and with deadly aim returned the fire, emptying saddles and bringing down many a gallant steed.

Upright and cool, Buffalo Bill stood on foot, his rifle firing steadily and with deadly aim, while Wild Dare, as calm, and full of nerve, was also pouring fatal shots into the enemy's ranks.

"At them, ye Leaguers; push over their works," suddenly cried a familiar voice to the ears of the scout, and he beheld the Mexican he had last seen on the prairie with Malcolm Moore and Rena Alvez, his captives.

Yes, it was El Ramon, the chief of the League of the Rio Grande.

Raising his rifle to fire upon the robber leader, and thus end his days, the scout found the weapon so choked up with burnt powder that it would not explode, and instantly he drew his pistols.

But he had forgotten; they were empty.

Encouraged by their desperate young leader the bandits had gained a hold upon the wagons, and, dismounting quickly, were pouring into the circle in large numbers, at two different points, cutting down the prairiemen who still bravely defended their line.

One glance around him and Buffalo Bill was about to rush to the aid of his comrades, with his rifle clubbed as a weapon; but a stern voice said in his ear:

"All is lost! we can do no more."

"Yes, El Ramon has won the wagons, but not yet all; come!"

The person who had said to the scout that "all was lost," was Wild Dare, who in agony of spirit felt that there was no more hope.

But the words of the scout reassured him, and rapidly following his brave companion, he crossed the corral to where the horses were, and from their number rapidly took his own gallant steed, Wild Dare's black, and the two animals ridden by Lola and her maid.

"Here, take them down to the stream, and put Miss Van Loo and her maid at once in the saddle; guide them across the creek, and there I will join you."

"My friend, you have made me a new man; her danger unnerved me," and quickly Wild Dare led the three horses away to obey the scout's instructions.

"Massa, for de Lord's sake can't dis nigger git away from dis debbil's den?" and Toby stood beside the scout, his eyes rolling fearfully with terror.

"Yes; take a horse from yonder corral; and, see here, you know the steed of Lone Dick, the guide?"

"Yes, massa, I does."

"Lead him out, too, and half-a-dozen other horses besides, and hold them here until I return."

"Yes, massa," and Toby hastened to obey, while Buffalo Bill sprang into his saddle, and with his revolvers again loaded, dashed once more to where the fight was still raging fiercely, for, though the bandits had every advantage, the prairiemen gave back stubbornly, contesting every inch of ground, though they knew full well the fight was lost to them.

"Lone Dick, your horse awaits you yonder on the bank; take your comrades and fall back while I make a charge upon your foes."

The guide looked up and beheld the towering form of the mounted scout above him, a revolver in each hand; but Lone Dick was not the man to escape at another's expense and he cried:

"I'm dinged gonad, mister, if I'se the man to git and leave you in a muss."

But the scout waited for no reply; a word to his horse, a series of wild yells, a rattling of his revolvers and he had spurred right into the midst of the bandits, who fell back in terror from his path, and the iron hoofs of the angry bay, who seemed to understand just what was wanted of him.

"Whoop! come fellers, yonder crowds the devils in and all around us, and we must git; see yonder! Holy Jerusalem and tom cats, but that feller is a whole team and a horse to let."

As Lone Dick spoke he rapidly fell back toward the banks of the stream, where Toby met him with his horse, and as the scout dashed up, he found the guide, the negro, and half-a-dozen prairiemen mounted and ready for flight.

"It is hard to give up, boys, but life is sweet and it is our only chance."

"See, yonder come the devils upon us; one volley to check them, and then away."

As Buffalo Bill spoke, the bandits, headed by El Ramon, rushed upon them, having overcome every obstacle, to suddenly recoil before the discharge from the rifles of the prairiemen.

As they fell back in confusion the scout suddenly had the idea flash through his mind that the fight might yet be regained by a bold charge, and, drawing his holster pistols, he shouted in triumphant tones:

"At them, men! Come, with a rush, drive them back."

One bound of the splendid bay and he was borne forward into their very midst, and the line closed around him, seeing which Toby set the example of rapid flight, the disease was catching and the prairiemen followed, while Lone Dick, with bitter curses, brought up the rear, for he felt that all was lost.

Urging their horses into the stream, they quickly crossed to the other bank, where Wild Dare, Lola and Marrita, the Peon maid, awaited them.

"But Buffalo Bill! Where is he?" cried Wild Dare in alarm, as he glanced at the party.

"Gone under, Wild Dare, as we will go if we don't leave these diggins pretty soon," replied one of the prairiemen, curtly.

"Too bad, too bad, to thus see a brave man die, and for our sake," cried Wild Dare, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Cannot something be done to save him? Is he dead?" cried Lola in great distress.

"You bet he is kicking; gosh darn, but don't yer hear that thar shout?" almost yelled Lone Dick, as the sudden wild war cry of the scout was heard, and immediately after came the ringing words:

"Save yourselves who can!"

"Jerusalem! but that feller has got more lives than a hull litter of kittens; come, fellers, we must git or the Leaguers 'll raise our hair," and leading the way, Lone Dick set off across the prairie, followed by the whole party, all most sad at having to leave behind them their dead and dying comrades and the daring man who had proven himself such a giant in battle.

As they sped across the prairie, the frequent crack of a rifle or revolver was heard, and Lone Dick looked back as he galloped along and said:

"That feller is the king pin, I tell yer; he isn't half dead yit."

Then followed a sudden, and to the flying party a most surprising rattle of rifles and revolvers, and they believed that assistance had come, and drew rein; but the moment after another of the wild war-cries of Buffalo Bill arose on the air, followed by one or two scattering shots, a sound of mingled yells and curses, and all was silent once more.

With sad hearts the party again pressed on in flight, and for half an hour no word was spoken, and then came rapid clatter of iron hoofs behind them, and, believing they were pursued, they urged their horses to greater speed.

But nearer and nearer grew the hoof-strokes, and suddenly the indistinct form of a horseman was seen, who, as the moonlight shone full upon him, was recognized, and welcomed with one long, loud shout of joy, in which even Lola's sweet voice was heard, for suddenly dashing into their midst was none other than Buffalo Bill.

"Gosh darn my buttons, but that feller's the devil," cried Lone Dick, with enthusiastic frontier praise, while Toby rejoined with bated breath:

"Fore de Lord, honey, he am so."

Waving his sombrero around his head, the scout greeted the party with a shout, crying out at the same time:

"On, comrades, on! A few more miles and the League of the Rio Grande has lost a part of their prize!"

Then away, with renewed hope, dashed the small cavalcade, following the lead of the scout, until, after crossing a narrow stream, they halted in a small *motte* for the rest all so sadly needed, especially the scout, for he had not come unscathed from his desperate conflict with the prairie bandits.

CHAPTER LXIX.

A RACE AGAINST DEATH.

When the small party halted in the timber, Buffalo Bill sought a cool spring and began to bathe his wounds, which, though slight, were numerous, for he had received a cut in one leg from a knife, and three or four bullet shots in the arms and head; but none of them did the scout seem to consider of any consequence.

As he knelt beside the spring, Lola Van Loo approached him and said in her soft tones:

"You will let me dress your wounds, will you not?"

The scout's face flushed, a smile hovered around his mouth, and with a bow he yielded, seating himself upon a mossy bank, while the maiden with delicate touch and skillful hand, bound up and dressed the wounds, using her own handkerchief for the purpose.

"Now, tell us, scout, how it was that you escaped from that gang of bandits, after Lone Dick and my friends believed you dead?" asked Wild Dare, with interest.

"First let me see to my horse, captain——"

"Massa Lone Dick and me done 'tend to him, sah, and we wash him off where he was scratched, and rub him down, so dat he as gay as a kitten now, and eatin' grass same as nuffin was de matter," and all laughed at Toby's long-winded remark, while the scout said:

"You were very kind, Toby. Now, captain, when we poured our last volley upon the bandits, it confused them so that I believed a bold dash might regain the fight; so I charged into the midst of the fellows, and am glad I was not followed, as I had hoped to be, for a reinforcement arrived, and I made an important discovery, which I will not now make known.

"Finding I was hemmed in, I rode in between two of the wagons, and with surprise discovered that the bandits did not follow me up.

"Now, they were planning to take me alive, as I soon discovered; but their delay gave me not only time to reload my revolvers, but also to dismount and pick up a rifle, there it lies, which you see is the counterpart of my repeater, which is choked up with burnt powder.

"The new rifle had but one chamber empty, and that I quickly filled from my ammunition pouch.

"Then I felt ready for the fray, determined not to await the attack, I charged suddenly out from my position, firing as I went.

"Surprised by my sudden move, for they evidently believed me at their mercy, the bandits fired at random, fell rapidly aside, and I passed on, to be followed by a few scattering shots, which, as you see, did me no particular harm," and the scout laughed lightly, and thanking Lola again for her kindness to him, he threw himself down upon his serape, just as the eastern skies began to grow gray before the approach of day, and the silvery light of the moon faded away.

Following the example of the plainsman, Lola and her maid also lay down to rest, and, soon, excepting the two guards Wild Dare had set to watch, the whole party were lost in deep slumber.

After a few hours' rest the scout arose, greatly refreshed and from his accompanying store of provisions soon had a breakfast for all, consisting of jerked buffalo meat broiled on the coals, crackers toasted and a pot of hot coffee.

When all was in readiness Toby awakened his young mistress, who, greatly refreshed by her sleep, relished her breakfast, and was soon ready for the journey ahead of her.

By noon the cavalcade of fifteen persons filed out of the *motte*, and with Buffalo Bill at their head, struck off across the seemingly boundless prairie, the scout hoping to reach the hacienda of Don Alvez by nightfall.

Nor was he disappointed, for ere the sun reached the horizon the hacienda was in full view.

And yet another danger threatened them, for out upon the prairie, also destined for the hacienda, was visible a large band of horsemen, whom, after a close scrutiny through his glass, the scout pronounced Comanches.

"And now we must ride for it, as they are between us and Tacos, and behind us is El Ramon. Come, spare not your horses!"

Swiftly over the prairie dashed the party, urging on their horses to their utmost speed, with Wild Dare riding by the side of Lola, who was cool and cheerful, and Toby beside Marrita, the Peon, for, as he expressed it to Lone Dick:

"I rader likes dat 'oman, if she is an Indian squaw lady."

Ahead of the party on his matchless steed rode the scout, and close behind him came Lone Dick, armed with the new repeating rifle which the scout had found, and given to the guide as soon as his own rifle was clean and ready for use once more.

Then came Wild Dare and Lola, Toby and Marrita, and bringing up the rear were the prairiemen and drivers who had escaped from the corral, and all that were left of that once gallant little band.

On, on, faster and faster sped the horses, until the hacienda was only a mile away, and yet only the same distance was between the band of Indians and the hacienda, and wildly they rode to catch their prey, for, fully a hundred in number it would have been useless to attempt to meet them on the part of the whites.

Nearer and nearer to the hacienda both parties drew, until only a quarter of a mile divided the Indians from their paleface foes, and with set teeth Wild Dare had decided to let Lola and Marrita, with Toby, go on toward the ranch, while he and his men rode directly for the Comanche band to give them battle and thus divert them from the maiden.

But ere he could propose what was in his thoughts Buffalo Bill wheeled in his saddle and said:

"Spur on hard for the hacienda, I will check them for a moment."

Although the horses of the party were straining every muscle, a word to the gallant bay from the scout, and he bounded forward with a speed that none in the party deemed possible.

Swiftly he rushed on, and right toward the heart of the Indian column, while, not to be outdone, Lone Dick followed his lead, though at a much slower pace.

With mighty bounds the large bay carried the scout onward, and in surprise the leading Indians somewhat slackened their speed, to see a single horseman thus dare them.

Then rang out across the prairie the wild cry of the scout, and without checking his speed his rifle went to his shoulder and rapidly the reports echoed

far and wide, and Indian after Indian fell from his horse.

Dashing close up to the head of the column the scout emptied his revolvers into the crowded ranks, momentarily checking their advance.

But their prey was before them, and the Comanche Indians are bold horsemen and brave warriors, and on they rushed once more, forcing the scout to fly before them.

But suddenly another enemy appeared in Lone Dick, who quickly emptied his new repeating rifle, and, discovering that Wild Dare and his party had entered the *motte* that sheltered the hacienda, the plainsman and the guide spurred rapidly forward.

But a few bounds only had their horses taken, when an arrow from a Comanche brave pierced the steed ridden by Lone Dick, and with a snort he fell heavily to the ground, hurling his rider to the prairie with such force as to stun him.

A cry of horror went up from Wild Dare and Lola, who had witnessed the accident, for they had reached the hacienda and received a warm welcome from Don Alvez and Rena.

On rushed the Comanche braves, only a short distance behind, and a wild and terrible yell broke from them as Lone Dick fell, for they felt certain of one scalp.

But no, Buffalo Bill answered their yell with his defiant cry, and, like the wind, the gallant bay circled round, and lessening his speed as he came to where Lone Dick lay, his rider was seen to bend far over, seize in his powerful arms the unconscious guide, and with an exertion of his marvelous strength raise the limp form before him up on the saddle, while from his stern lips broke another cry, a shout of triumph that was answered by all at the hacienda.

Then on bounded the noble bay, amid a shower of arrows, and in spite of his double load and long run, he rapidly distanced the mustangs of the Indians and dashed into the court of the hacienda with half-a-dozen arrows sticking in his flanks and hanging from his master's buckskin hunting shirt.

"Oh! you are now certainly hurt," cried Lola, bending from the low roof and gazing earnestly down upon the scout.

"Not in the least, lady; the arrows did not penetrate—ah, Lone Dick, old fellow, you are all right,

as I believed," and the scout glanced toward the guide, who had suddenly recovered consciousness to, with surprise, find himself in the arms of the scout.

"Wall, I guesses I is, and it seems you is the reason why I isn't sculped, comrade.

"I guesses as if this here baby better git on its feet now, kase it ain't got no use for a mammy, and ain't milk hungry," and with a grin the guide slid down from the arms of the plainsman, who at once dismounted, and devoted himself to his horse, tenderly caring for his wounds, which were not serious, while Wild Dare joined Captain Moore's force to give the Indians battle, for, after the escape of the scout and guide they had halted on the prairie to look after their dead and wounded, and plan an attack upon the hacienda.

"Bravo, Buffalo Bill, and God bless you," had been Captain Moore's salutation to the scout, but he added in a whisper:

"No sign of the colonel yet."

"I will at once go and find him, sir, for this will be the point of attack, as I thought," and the next moment Buffalo Bill dashed away, followed by a rousing cheer.

CHAPTER LXX.

AT THE HACIENDA.

I will now return to the time when Buffalo Bill and Malcolm Moore rode together from the hacienda of Don Alvez toward Tacos.

After journeying on for a few miles, the scout discovered a line of horsemen, whom he soon descried were troopers, as the jingle of their sabers was distinctly heard, and the moonlight reflected against their arms.

A hail from Malcolm Moore and the voice of Colonel Van Loo answered, while the troopers came quickly forward, the old officer saying:

"Malcolm, my boy, I have been on the search for you, for rumors came in that some of El Ramon's band were about; where have you been roaming, and——"

"I will tell you, colonel; but first let me present my new friend, Buffalo Bill, the Border King."

"Why, no! what, do I at last have the pleasure and honor of grasping the hand of Buffalo Bill, the King of Bordermen?"

"So I am called, Colonel Van Loo; but the pleasure of meeting is mutual, for I was seeking you, in company with Captain Moore, to make known certain news I had discovered regarding the haunts of the League of the Rio Grande."

"It is of this very band I would know, sir; but tell me how it is I find you two together."

In a few words Captain Moore then made known his adventures of the afternoon, and the great services the scout had rendered the Senorita Rena and himself, to all of which the colonel listened with the utmost attention, and then said:

"You say that you believe the Comanche band you met was a forerunner of a large force?"

"I am confident of it, sir, and the warning given by the Song Bird of the Comanches proves I am right in my supposition," quietly responded the scout.

"How many warriors can the Comanches and Apaches put on the warpath, think you?"

"Fully half a thousand if they will it; but they will hardly send their whole force here, but divide them up in raiding parties to different points of the border."

"You are right; well, I feel that my first duty is to prepare to meet and punish these red devils, and by daylight my whole force shall be under arms; but, scout, there is one matter that troubles me exceedingly, and that is the coming of my only child, my daughter Lola.

"She was to leave some time since, and if the supply and emigrant train, with which she is coming, has pressed on rapidly, she is due now; if they have not, she may not arrive for a week.

"Yet, scout, I am greatly troubled about her."

"Can I do aught to serve you in the matter, colonel? If so, command me."

"From my heart, I thank you; yes, you are the very man, and I would have you seek the train and turn it upon a southerly trail.

"By so doing you may lose the fighting here and miss a few scalps, but, then, if report speaks truly, you already have a large supply of them on hand."

"I will start at once, sir; but may I offer a suggestion, sir, for I was sent to this part of the country by the commanding general to discover just what the Comanches were plotting, and also to ferret out the secret haunts of the outlaws.

"I reported weeks ago that the Comanches and Apaches had leagued together to attack along the border, and the outlaws were plotting also to move against the settlements, and these discoveries were the reason for the general acting so promptly."

"Yes, and my being ordered here to make Tacos a military post.

"The general said that you would report to me, and——"

"I have my papers, sir, and——"

"Never mind your papers now, Scout Cody, but tell me what it was that you wished to suggest?"

"That you go into camp here, sir, without campfires, and send back to Tacos for all your force to join you here with all speed, for I am sure the attack will be made on the string of ranches first, and the one of Don Alvez will be the first to suffer; so it would be well if Captain Moore could return there with a few men."

"Go at once, Captain Moore, and take the men I have, save a small escort, for I shall myself return to Tacos, organize my command and be able to join you by dark to-morrow.

"But you, Scout Cody, will go and save my daughter from the danger she and those with her are almost certain to run into."

"I will do so, sir."

It was at once arranged that Captain Moore and his force should dash on to the hacienda of Don Alvez, Colonel Von Loo and half-a-dozen men return to Tacos, and Buffalo Bill strike the trail to head off the wagon train Lola Van Loo was supposed to be with on her way to join her father.

Captain Moore reached the hacienda, and was just in time, for soon after he was besieged there.

The colonel started upon the ride rapidly to Tacos and fitted out his command for a hard and extended expedition, marching for the Alvez hacienda.

Colonel Van Loo was at the head of his command, but with artillery and commissary wagons the march was slow of a necessity, and they were yet some distance from the hacienda when a horseman was seen coming like the wind over the moonlit prairie.

Buffalo Bill the next instant reined up alongside Colonel Van Loo and said:

"Your daughter is at the Alvez hacienda, sir, but her train was attacked by El Ramon, but she escaped with others.

"The Indians are in large force around the cienda, and others assembling there, sir, but Capt Moore can fight them off until you get there, and will show you the way."

Buffalo Bill had spoken coolly, yet rapidly, giving the colonel no chance to utter a word until he finished, when the gallant old officer said:

"I feel that I owe my daughter's safety to you Scout Cody, and you, knowing the danger at the hacienda, bravely risked life to come and urge me on."

"Gentlemen, it is a case of life and death; we must ride for it, if we have to desert the wagons," and the colonel turned to his officers.

"Yes, Colonel Van Loo, you must urge on your men," said Buffalo Bill, reigning in the splendid animal Rena Alvez had insisted he should ride to spare Red Ranger.

Rapidly the cavalcade swept on, the wagons keeping close behind the artillery, for the teamsters had no desire to be left without protection upon the prairie.

Soon they came in sound of heavy firing, and it was told them that Captain Moore was hotly engaged at the hacienda.

As the firing suddenly ceased Colonel Van Loo exclaimed:

"My God! have they taken the hacienda?"

"I think not—no, the Indians have been reinforced, doubtless, by some of their roving men, and have hauled off on the prairie to hold a council of war."

And the next moment it was discovered that the scout was right, for off upon the prairie was visible a large number of horsemen, drawn up in line, while at the hacienda all was dark and quiet.

Dashing up to the timber the effects of the fighting were visible, for upon all sides lay dead and dying men and horses, and as the party halted at the hacienda, they were met by Captain Malcolm Moore whose appearance proved he had had a hard fight on it, for his head was bound up with a handkerchief, his face was hard and stern, and his clothes were covered with blood, while around him were gathered his troopers, looking tired, soiled with gore and dirt, but determined and ready for another fray.

"Malcolm, my boy, God bless you! You have made a bold fight of it, and are wounded," cried the colonel, in pain and alarm commingled.

"They greatly outnumber us, sir; but we beat them back, and they are out on the prairie, having received reinforcements. My wound is a slight cut in the head, only; but your daughter is here, sir."

"So Buffalo Bill informed me; come, go with me to meet her," and following the scout the two officers entered the house, and the next moment Colonel Van Loo found the arms of Lola clinging to his neck.

"Thank Heaven! you are safe, child," cried the old soldier.

"Yes, father, and it is all owing to that noble man, Scout Cody," and in a few words Lola told her father all that had happened to her, and the gallant part the scout had played in her rescue.

Then the colonel was welcomed by Senorita Rena, who was weeping, for her father, the don, had been seriously wounded.

"But you must not stay here, for a battle is going to be fought, and our defeat would bring ruin upon you.

"Senorita Alvez, I will have our father at once removed to Tacos, and you and Lola, with hacienda servants, must accompany him," said the colonel.

And so it was arranged, and Don Alvez was placed in an easy vehicle, the two maidens mounted their horses, and followed by the servants, the party set off for Tacos, Rena parting with Malcolm with a display of emotion that made the young man's heart glad, and Lola bidding her brave old father good-by with tearful eyes and many an injunction to take care of himself, while she did not forget her brave escort, Duddy Dan, who had also proven himself a true hero.

Buffalo Bill led the party far out upon the prairie, leading the horse from the stable of Don Alvez, to give Red Ranger a rest and food, while Colonel Van Loo and Captain Moore at once set about preparing their forces for the battle they knew must come.

After escorting the party through all the danger from the Indian lines by a wide flank movement in the rear of the hacienda, and telling the guide, Lone Dick, to take them rapidly to Tacos, Buffalo Bill halted and said:

"Miss Van Loo, here I must leave you, for my duty calls me back——"

"Oh, sir, you have been so good to me, and I pray you do all you can to protect my dear old father," cried Lola, seizing the scout's hand as he stood beside her.

"I will do all I can, Miss Lola; now let me offer a few suggestions; the guard you have with you, the servants of the hacienda, are brave men, and will be all you need, for the Indians have all fled from the neighborhood of Tacos; still it is best to be on the safe side, and I advise you to cross the river, and seek a retreat in the old hacienda on the other side, with the few remaining soldiers in Tacos as a guard.

"The quartermaster certainly can arrange his plans to protect you in case of need.

"Now, good-by."

The scout said no more, but bounding into his saddle, raised his sombrero in salute, and dashed away.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE PRAIRIE BATTLE.

When Buffalo Bill returned to the hacienda, from escorting the small party toward Tacos, he found that Colonel Van Loo had made a most advantageous arrangement of the forces under his command.

The two howitzers were stationed on either side of the hacienda, just in the shelter of the timber, and heavily charged with grape shot, while the right wing of the line extended some hundred yards out upon the prairie, and was under command of Captain Malcolm Moore.

The left wing, extending out an equal distance was commanded by Captain Rupert Dancy, while the *motte* was held by the colonel, with the artilleryists, his couriers, Dan Dudley and his prairie men, and a dozen herdsmen belonging to the estate of Don Alvez.

As an independent command, to charge at will in the fight, Wild Dare and his men were valuable allies, while the half-dozen scouts and guides belonging to the command were awaiting the return of Buffalo Bill to lead them into action and bring on the engagement.

On the other hand, the Indians had formed in both line and column, a half a mile distant upon the prairie, the Comanches holding the center column, the Apaches that on either flank, and the line in reserve being another party of Comanches.

Though they outnumbered the palefaces four to one, there was no wavering along that line of troopers, although the wild yells of the Indians

proved that they felt confident of victory, and were anxious to have the whites attack them.

Presently up dashed Buffalo Bill, and a shout of welcome along the line greeted his arrival, while Colonel Van Loo, after learning of the safety of his daughter and her party, hastened to consult with him regarding his arrangements.

"It is splendidly arranged, colonel, and I would advise an instant attack."

"And not wait until daylight?"

"No, sir; the moon renders the prairie exceedingly light, and day will break within the hour."

"Very well; shall I open with my howitzers, for the Indians do not know I have them?"

"No, colonel, let me ride out with a few followers and taunt them to chase us, and when their columns move up, advance with your line, keeping the artillery hidden, and then they will charge, and it will be your time to let the howitzers speak, after which let the troopers charge them in squadrons, circling through their ranks, and centering at this point."

"Why, Scout Cody, you are a military genius; now all is ready, and my scouts will accompany you," said the old colonel.

Motioning to his squad to follow him, Buffalo Bill rode slowly out upon the prairie, while Malcolm Moore and Rupert Dancy returned to their posts at the head of their troopers.

Noticing the approach of the small party, the Indians fell back slowly to draw them as far as possible from the timber, and then Buffalo Bill gave the word, and their horses were urged into a gallop.

"Now, boys, spread out in a line of a hundred yards, and when you see me halt and raise my rifle, pour in your fire," cried Buffalo Bill, and all instantly obeyed, and rapidly the line of daring men charged toward the mass of Indian warriors, who suddenly halted, a wild yell burst along their lines, and they dashed forward.

Then Buffalo Bill reined his steed back, his rifle was raised to his shoulder, and once, twice, thrice, and so on rang out the deadly shots until ever cham-

ber was emptied, while the weapons of his comrades also poured a leaden hail into the crowded ranks of their foes.

But with maddening yells the warriors came on, and, wheeling rapidly, the line of scouts dashed back toward the timber, but not all to reach there, for two or three fell beneath the shower of shot poured upon them.

"Now, forward!" came the ringing tones of Buffalo Bill, and, with a cheer, the troops moved rapidly forward toward the charging Indians, who came on with yells that made the blood almost stand still.

"Ho! the guns—fire!" was heard above the din, and with deafening roar the two howitzers burst forth flame and iron hail, sending a deadly fire directly into the mass of horses and men.

"Troopers! charge!" rang out in Malcolm Moore's clear tones, and with the set cheer of the regular soldier the cavalry squadrons bore down upon the Indian forces, with a power that nothing human could withstand.

Right into the masses of red warriors, through whose center tore the iron shot, rushed the troopers, sabering right and left, and with fearful effect, while conspicuous above all others rode Buffalo Bill, his revolvers flashing constantly and making a circle of fire around him, until, having emptied his weapons, he drew a long saber which Captain Moore had given him, and with terrible force his arm swung the fatal blade while ever and anon his wild cry was heard above the sound of battle.

The Indian army of combined Comanches and Apaches were overwhelmed by the fire of the guns, the rushes of the troopers, and were completely demoralized, now breaking in mad panic and flying for their lives, until it became a manhunt.

They were glad to escape, terrorized by their fearful defeat, and in a night their plans of months undone, their hopes blasted.

The sun was well up when Buffalo Bill returned from the chase with Captain Moore and Wild Dare.

"Colonel Van Loo, the King of Prairiemen here has a favor to ask, sir."

"Weil, Moore, it is granted."

"He wishes to mount men on fresh horses, two all troops, sir, under my command and with Dan Dudley and his prairiemen also, in an irresistible force, and go on the hunt for El Ramon and his band."

"He can do so, and I hope it will be as thorough a defeat as that he enabled us to give the Indians," said the colonel.

"We hope to make it a wipeout, sir," quietly said Buffalo Bill.

In just one hour the start was made, and Buffalo Bill felt sure he knew just where to strike El Ramon and his command of outlaws.

Later, their camp was found just before dawn, the outlaw chief having heard the firing of the heavy guns, and sure that a large force of soldiers had arrived, he had hastily started upon a retreat to the river.

He had met the deserter from the wagon train, Hugh Hayward, and the greeting of the two was such that proved them friends.

In fact, Hugh Hayward was secretly an ally of the Mexican bandit leader, a decoy to lead trains into his power.

When Buffalo Bill discovered the camp of the outlaws it was quietly surrounded, then the attack made at dawn.

The first man to fall was Hugh Hayward, who met Dan Dudley face to face.

There was a quick exchange of shots. Dan Dudley was wounded, but Hugh Hayward fell dead.

And in the same way did Buffalo Bill rush upon El Ramon, the chief, and in the duel that followed at those quarters the Mexican bandit leader was shot through the heart by the scout.

"It was a wipeout, as you said, Scout Cody," remarked Captain Moore, and he added:

"And we have recovered Miss Van Loo's ambulance, the wagons of the prairie men and lost but very few.

"But poor Dudley is badly wounded and must be taken at once to Tacos."

It was just night when Lola Van Loo's ambulance, with Dan Dudley in it, and a wagon with the wounded men pulled into Tacos.

The two young ladies had arrived in safety with the wounded Don Alvez, and were comfortably located, and Dare Dudley was at once taken to the quarters of the colonel, at Lola's order, she constituting herself his special nurse, for she had become deeply interested in the young man.

"We owe all to that noble man, Scout Cody," said Lola, as she sat down with Rena that night talking.

"Yes, all; but I wish to tell you a secret, and you are at liberty to make it known to your father and also Captain Moore and the great scout, for the two latter noticed my father's strange behavior.

"It is that he told me to-day that he and El Ramon are kinsmen, that he owed his life years ago to the father of the outlaw and for that reason wished to save him from capture and being hanged, even after he knew how black-hearted he had become."

The secret was kept, only those referred to being told, when Colonel Van Loo and his command returned to Tacos, and with them Buffalo Bill, who had proven himself a hero of heroes, but, after a short stay at the post, departed upon other duties, in which he added to his fame.

Months after Buffalo Bill again went to Tacos, and at the earnest invitation of two young ladies, Lola Van Loo and Rena Alvez, to witness a double wedding.

Lola Van Loo had been won by Dare Dudley, who had been commissioned a lieutenant of cavalry in the United States army, and Rena Alvez was to become the wife of Captain Malcolm Moore.

The wedding was a grand affair, and the lion of the hour was the great scout, William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill.

LOOK AT THIS, BOYS!

19 PRIZES. || ANECDOTE PRIZE CONTEST || 19 PRIZES

WHO HAS HAD THE MOST EXCITING EXPERIENCE?

THAT'S the idea, boys. You have all had some narrow escapes, some dangerous adventures in your lives. Perhaps it was the capsizing of a boat, or the scaling of a cliff, or a close shave in a burning building or something else equally thrilling.

WRITE IT UP JUST AS IT HAPPENED.

We offer a handsome Prize for the most exciting and best written anecdote sent us by any reader of **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY**. The incident, of course, must relate to something that has happened to the writer himself, and it must also be strictly true.

It makes no difference how short the articles are, but no contribution must be longer than 500 words.

HERE ARE THE PRIZES!

TWO FIRST PRIZES.

For Two Most Exciting and Best Written Anecdotes.

Two first-class Spalding Standard Athletic Sweaters. Made of the finest Australian lambs' wool, exceedingly soft. Full fashioned to body and arms, and without seams of any kind. Colors: White Navy Blue, Black and Maroon.

TWO SECOND PRIZES.

For Two Second Best Anecdotes.

Two pairs of Raymond's All Clamp Ball Bearing Roller Skates. Bearings of the finest tempered steel, with 128 steel balls. For speed no skate has ever approached it.

FIVE THIRD PRIZES.

For Five Next Best Anecdotes.

Five pairs of Winslow's Speed Extension Ice Skates, with extension foot plates. These skates have detachable welded steel racing runners, also an extra set of short runners for fancy skating.

FOR NEXT TEN BEST ANECDOTES.

A Spalding 12 inch "Long Distance" Megaphone. Made of fire board, capable of carrying the sound of a human voice one mile, and in some instances, two miles. More fun than a barrel of monkeys.

The contest will continue until Dec. 1st, next.

Send in your anecdotes at once, boys. We are going to publish all of the best ones during the progress of the contest.

We will have to reserve to ourselves the right of judging which anecdote has the most merit, but our readers know that they may depend upon Street & Smith and on their absolute fairness and justice in conducting contests. This one will be no exception to the rule.

REMEMBER!

Whether your contribution wins a prize or not it stands a good chance of being published together with the name of the writer.

To become a contestant for these prizes, cut out the **Anecdote Contest Coupon**, printed herewith, fill it out properly, and send it to **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY**, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your anecdote. No anecdote will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

COUPON.

"BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY" ANECDOTE CONTEST.
PRIZE CONTEST No. 1.

Date.....1901

Name

City or town.....

State

Title of Anecdote

PRIZE ANECDOTE DEPARTMENT.

During the progress of the Anecdote Prize Contest this space will be devoted to the publication of the best anecdotes sent in by the contestants.

Here are some of those received this week. They are coming in with a rush, so hurry up, boys, and get yours in early.

The Mysterious Rider.

(By Edward K. Brown, Buffalo, Wyoming.)

My father's shanty was situated in the Bighorn Mountains, Wyoming, up to two years ago. With the exception of two companions and some friendly trappers, who lived about five miles distant, we had not seen a white man for nearly a year.

One day I was out hunting with Anderson Picket. We had just sighted an antelope, and were occupied in talking the animal, when we suddenly heard the neighing of a horse near us. Surprised at such an unusual sound in a neighborhood where very few human beings were to be encountered, we looked up and saw, hardly three hundred paces from us, a rider whose head was uncovered and his long hair floating in the wind that blew across the hills. He was a white-faced, haggard man, mounted on a thin horse.

For a few seconds he remained motionless, and then disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

In the afternoon I accompanied the men to their traps, and while they were setting them I walked up and down with my gun in my hand. We had resolved that if the rider should reappear to shoot his horse, and in that way get this singular creature into our hands.

Suddenly on the top of the hills, clearly outlined against the red sky, was the ghostly rider. I stood staring, spell-bound, at the apparition. Then a shot rang out, and the horse fell forward.

"Come on, and don't let the fellow crawl from under and get out," cried my father, the smoking gun still in his hand, and pulling the revolver from our belts we all hurried over the frozen creek that ran in front of the shanty, and up the declivity.

My father was the first to reach the top. With one bound, he stood next to the rider, who lay motionless on the quivering horse, of which he was still astride.

He examined the rider closely.

"What is this?" he cried, astonished. "The fellow is bound fast to the horse—look here—even with a chain." Horrified, he sprang back. "Look, the man has a mark around his neck. Great Heaven! he's been hanging—he's been lashed to the horse, and the poor beast has been carrying around a lifeless burden."

Filled with astonishment and horror, we saw that my father's suspicions admitted of no doubt. The rope had sunk deep into the man's muscular throat, and the knot was still attached to it.

Father then raised the dead man's head.

"Why, it's Black Sam!" he exclaimed. "He was a wild fellow, but he got his deserts. His gun was always ready, and he has sent many a good fellow to pass in his checks. Who knows how long it is that he has been astride this horse? Corpses do not decompose up here in the mountains, but dry up; I've often noticed that in dead animals."

Shuddering, he turned away. The dead man, with his withered face and staring eyes, had a truly horrifying appearance.

In a few moments the dead man was released, and we soon had a grave dug, in which he was laid. After this had been filled in we rolled stones and small rocks over it to prevent the wolves from disturbing the dead.

Wolves.

(By Oscar Bliss, Maulins, N. Y.)

I am seventeen years old, and at the time my adventure occurred one year and a half ago I was living in Arietta, one of the settlements on the border of the Adirondack wilderness.

It was in winter, and the snow up there is so deep that we have to travel on snowshoes.

It was a few days after my father died, and I had to get to Wells by the next day with an important paper connected with my father's estate.

It was a fifteen-mile tramp and the roads were impassable on account of the snow.

I got there all right, and felt so fresh that I determined to start home the same night. I carried a shotgun, so felt prepared for all danger.

I had had a pretty hearty dinner at the farmhouse of a friend.

It was pretty nearly morning when I drew near my own home, and I was just congratulating myself that I had passed all danger, when suddenly I heard the howling of a wolf and then of another.

Turning a bend in the road, what was my astonishment to find before me fully a dozen wolves gathered about a tree.

Looking up into the tree I was amazed to see two men.

I had had quite a little experience in trapping, and I knew that the wolves at that hour could be easily frightened.

So I fired at the nearest wolf, and in an instant the whole pack were dashing away toward the woods.

The poor men in the tree were almost paralyzed with cold. They had been attacked by the wolves and had killed several of them, using up all their ammunition.

Fortunately at this juncture one of the men had discovered a fallen treetop, which was some ten feet from the ground.

They thought that if they could walk up this long tree to the branches, they would be safe.

So they climbed up the tree. But the wolves could walk up a log, too, and the men had to club them back.

Then they managed to climb a little higher in the tree, which put them out of reach of the wolves.

They were, of course, very grateful to me for getting them out of their predicament, but the wolves would not have stayed long after daylight anyhow.

The snow was well beaten down all around the tree, and we counted the bodies of seven wolves that the men had killed.

How I Got Even.

(By Harry Brewster, Schenectady, N. Y.)

The circumstance to which I allude took place last Monday morning.

I was coming down-town early, and when I boarded the electric car there was only sitting room for one in it, and two-thirds of that was occupied by a small but important-looking citizen, who was sitting sideways.

I hated to disturb him, so I squeezed myself into the vacant space with as little stir and fuss as possible, and in return for my thoughtfulness he glared at me over the top of his paper for a while, and then calmly resumed his reading, not deigning to remove his knee from my anatomy.

It wasn't very pleasant for me, but, as I said before, he was a very important-appearing personage, and—Well, I had never been introduced to his high mightiness, and it hardly seemed the proper thing for a poor, humble worm of the dust like myself to call his attention to the fact that he was occupying more than his share of the seat, and taking up considerable room that I could put to good use in case I had it, so I sat there and suffered in silence, although I was gradually getting

madder and madder as the car plunged along on its way down-town.

Presently a two-hundred-pound female, of Celtic extraction, got aboard, carrying a big bundle of dirty clothes, and I promptly jumped up and offered her my seat.

It was a mean thing to do, I know, but I did it willfully and maliciously, and "with the keen joy that warriors feel to meet a foeman worthy of their steel," as the poet expresses it, and I was never so pleased over a little thing—or a big thing, rather—as I was when she sat down.

She bumped against his knees with a slam that sent them spinning round where they belonged, then she plumped herself down in the seat, and squeezed him up against the end of the car, and shoved her bundle over on his lap so that there wasn't even room to hold his paper out to read; and there she sat all the rest of the way, with a calm and contented look on her face, while he wriggled, and twisted, and groaned, and thought unutterable things—things that the editor of no respectable journal would print for a million dollars in cold cash.

It was a mean trick to play on a fellow, I acknowledge that; but the chance to get even with him was too good to be lost; and, besides, the poor woman needed a seat, and I'm not the boy to sit down and see a two-hundred-pound female standing up.

How I Killed a Grizzly.

(By Julius Vernon, Boise City, Idaho.)

I was out hunting one day this last summer with my Stevens sporting rifle and had a narrow escape from being killed by an immense grizzly.

I had stopped near a stream to rest, and was sitting by the water side watching some bright speckled trout in a pool, when an old bear and cub came down from the chapparal to drink. It is well known that only when they are with their young cubs are the grizzlies apt to attack human beings. I saw the fiery eyes of the bear fixed on me as it came rushing down, and with three bounds I reached the live oak tree. Fortunately my Stevens rifle had a sling, and throwing the strap over my shoulder I was able to climb the tree, taking the gun with me.

The bear was close upon me and attempted to follow me up the tree.

I swung my rifle around as quickly as I could and fired at it. I didn't know what effect my bullet had, so I fired again.

But the bear kept right on toward me.

I could see that the grizzly was wounded so I fired again and again.

It was not until I had sent down the fifth shot through one of its eyes into the brain that the shaggy monster

ased its furious efforts to reach me, and fell dead at the foot of the tree. Then I sent a ball right down through the cub's head, and it dropped dead on its mother's body.

It was a long time before I dared to climb down, and when I did I ran all the way home.

Then my father and two or three others set out and fought the bear and her cub home.

Expelled.

(By Robert Overton, Nahant, Mass.)

The boarding-school was Milton House, situated near a little fishing village on the New England coast. The head master was named Professor Smoale.

For a schoolmaster his character was very satisfactory. He was about sixty, and chock full of learning and experience. He was very tender-hearted and emotional. Any story of suffering, and particularly, any tale of devotion, and unselfishness and heroism, would touch him up like anything.

He had a terrifically big head, but I really believe that his heart was bigger still, though he did unjustly expel Bunnie Laws—why he was called Bunnie, I never knew, but he was—and me.

It was all on account of his own character that I got hold of the brilliant idea that ended in dismissal. The idea was all right; it was the way it worked out that was all wrong. My fellow-victim of a sad failure on our master's part to understand my scheme properly was the only chap in the school I took into my confidence.

"Let's decoy him down to the rocks," I proposed, "when the tide's up. Then you rush forward and pitch him in, Bunnie. I'll be in hiding. As he strikes the water, I'll rush forward, with a shout, knock you down, and plunge in with a life preserver, and save his life."

But Bunnie wouldn't agree to that.

The fact that we both were good swimmers, naturally led us to give the preference to a water rescue, and in this direction we were also led by the fact that the professor was in the habit of crossing to a point farther up the shore to visit a friend who lived there. He used to go in a rowboat, belonging to a man named Bill Chalks.

Bill Chalks used to bring his boat up the little creek that ran close to the school, embark Mr. Smoale, row him over to the point, and return there for him when he wanted to come back.

Wednesday or Saturday was generally selected for these visits, the afternoons of those days being half holidays. We decided to get Bill Chalks to upset his fare from the boat the very next time he was taking him over. The accident was to take place two or three hundred yards from the shore. We would be strolling along, witness the sad affair and plunge in to the rescue.

We easily won Bill Chalks over by liberal promises of part of our week's allowance of money.

We were both in a fever of excitement till the following afternoon arrived. After dinner we dressed in our oldest suits, and made off for the ocean. We saw Bill Chalks row up the creek—and then we waited and watched.

By and by—but quite half an hour later than we expected—we heard the splash of the oars again. It was all right—there was the boat—there was Bill—there was the doomed professor, seated calmly in the stern. Little did he dream of the rescue in store for him!

They reached the mouth of the creek, and then shot out into the ocean.

"Off with our boots, Bunnie!" I cried in a whisper. "The moment is at hand."

Just the distance agreed on had been reached—every instant we expected to see good old Professor Smoale floundering in the water. But, with a vigorous pull of his bowside scull Chalks suddenly shot the boat out of our sight behind a barge. From Chalk's own boastful account afterward, we know exactly all about the dark deed of treachery and deceit that went on behind that barge.

He told the professor of our plot and then told him that he would jump in the water instead of the professor, while Mr. Smoale was to give a cry of "Help!"

We know now that the professor was won over to his way of thinking after a short argument.

Bunnie and I heard the splash; heard the shout for help.

"Now for it," we said—and plunged boldly into the tide, like the heroes we were, striking out toward the barge with might and main.

I swam round the bows of the barge, my fellow hero swam round the stern. We caught sight of the struggling figure in the water at the same moment. At the same moment we reached him, and made a grab at him. He dived out of our clutch and out of our sight—but not before we had each looked at his face—the grinning face of Bill Chalks, the boatman. We each saw also another face—the awful face of Professor Smoale, who was seated, of course, safely in the boat.

I felt my heroism go out of me. So did Bunnie, I'm certain. We both ceased to swim. The tide swept us down the shore.

Then we cried "Help!"

I can finish in a few words. Chalks clambered into his boat again, pulled after us, and picked up Bunnie Laws a few hundred yards away. I was carried farther on, and was saved by a fishing boat ten miles away.

They said it was about half a mile from where Bunnie was saved, but in my opinion it was ten miles.

The next day we were both expelled.

BOYHOODS OF FAMOUS MEN.

This department contains each week the story of the early career of some celebrated American. Watch for these stories and read them, boys. They are of the most fascinating interest.

Those already published are: No. 1.—Buffalo Bill; No. 2.—Kit Carson; No. 3.—Texas Jack; No. 4.—Col. Daniel Boone.

No. 5.—David Crockett.

(TOLD BY HIMSELF.)

It seems strange to think that the following was the boyhood history of the famous backwoodsman who so greatly distinguished himself as a fighter, first in the war of 1812, under Jackson, and later in the war against the Creek Indians in Florida, who successfully ran for Congress and who, in a tour of the Northern cities, including Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Pittsburg, was honored and feted as few men have been.

And yet we have his own words as to his early career, and most interesting reading it is.

Perhaps all do not know how gallantly he died. He was killed in the Alamo in Mexico while fighting for Texan Independence.

A writer who describes his last moments says he stood in an angle of the fort, the barrel of his shattered rifle in one hand, in his left his huge bowie knife, dripping blood. There was a frightful gash across his forehead, while around him there was a complete barrier of about twenty Mexicans, lying pell-mell and dying.

It was there he finally fell, without a groan, while his cause triumphed.

Following is his account of his boyhood:

My father's name was John Crockett, and he was of Irish descent. He was either born in Ireland or on a passage from that country to America across the Atlantic. He was by profession a farmer, and spent the early part of his life in the State of Pennsylvania. The name of my mother was Rebecca Hawkins. She was an American woman, born in the State of Maryland, between York and Baltimore. It is likely I may have heard where they were married, but if so, I have forgotten. It is, however, certain that they were, or else the public would never have been troubled with the history of David Crockett, their son.

At some time, though I cannot say certainly when, my father, as I have understood, lived in Lincoln County, in the State of North Carolina. How long I don't know. But when he removed from there, he settled in that district of country which is now embraced in the

east division of Tennessee, though it was not then erected into a State.

He settled there under dangerous circumstances, both to himself and his family, as the country was full of Indians, who were at that time very troublesome. By the Creeks, my grandfather and grandmother Crockett were both murdered in their own house, and on the very spot of ground where Rogersville, in Hawkins County, now stands.

But before I get on the subject of my own troubles, and a great many very funny things that have happened to me, like all other historians and biographers, I should inform the public that I was born myself, as well as other folks, and that this important event took place, according to the best information I have received of the subject, on the 17th of August, in the year 1786.

One day when I must have been quite young, my four elder brothers, and a well-grown boy of about fifteen years old, by the name of Campbell, and myself, were all playing on the river side, when all the rest of them got into my father's canoe, and put out to amuse themselves on the water, leaving me on the shore alone.

Just a little distance below them, there was a fall in the river, which went slap-right straight down. My brothers, though they were little fellows, had been used to paddling the canoe, and could have carried it safely anywhere about there; but this fellow Campbell wouldn't let them have the paddle, but, fool like, undertook to manage it himself. I reckon he had never seen a water craft before; and it went just any way but the way he wanted it. There he paddled, and paddled, and paddled—all the while going wrong, until, in a short time, here they were all going straight forward, stern foremost, right plump to the falls; and if they had only a fair shake, they would have gone over as slick as a whistle. It wasn't this, though, that scared me, for I was so infernal mad that they had left me on the shore that I had as soon have seen them all go over the falls a bit, as any other way. But their danger was seen by a man by

he name of Kendall, but I'll be shot if it was Amos, for believe I would know him yet if I was to see him. This man Kendall was working in a field on the bank, and knowing there was no time to lose, he started full tilt, and here he come like a canebrake afire; and as he ran he threw off his coat, and then his jacket and then his shirt, for I know when he got to the water he had nothing on but his breeches. But seeing him in such a hurry, and tearing off his clothes as he went, I had no doubt but that the devil or something else was after him—and close on him, too, as he was running within an inch of his life. This alarmed me, and I screamed out like a young painter. But Kendall didn't stop for this. He went ahead with all might, and as full bent on saving the boys, as Amos was on moving the deposits. When he came to the water, he plunged in, and where it was too deep to wade, he would swim, and where it was shallow enough he went bolting on, and by such exertion as I never saw at any other time in my life, he reached the canoe, when it was within twenty or thirty feet of the falls, and so great was the suck and so swift the current, that poor Kendall had a hard time of it to stop them at last, as Amos will to stop the mouth of the people about his stock-jobbing. But he hung on to the canoe till he got it stopped and then drew it out of danger. When we got out, I found the boys were more scared than I had been, and the only thing that comforted me was the belief that it was a punishment on them for leaving me ashore.

Shortly after this my father removed and settled in the same county, about ten miles above Greenville.

There a circumstance happened which made a lasting impression on my memory, though I was but a small child. Joseph Hawkins, who was a brother to my mother, was in the woods hunting for deer. He was passing near a thicket of brush, in which one of our neighbors was gathering some grapes, as it was in the fall of the year, and the grape season. The body of the man was hid by the brush, and it was only as he would raise his hand to pull the bunches, that any part of him could be seen. It was a likely place for deer, and my uncle, having no suspicion that it was any human being, but supposing the raising of the hand to be an occasional twitch of a deer's ear, fired at the lump, and as the devil would have it, unfortunately shot the man through the body. I saw my father draw a silk handkerchief through the bullet hole, and entirely through his body; yet after a while he got well, as little as any one would have thought it. What became of him, or whether he is dead or alive, I don't know; but I reckon he didn't fancy the business of gathering grapes in an out-of-the-way thicket soon again.

The next move my father made was to the mouth of

Cove Creek, where he and a man by the name of Thomas Galbreath undertook to build a mill in partnership. They went on very well with their work until it was nigh done, when there came a second epistle to Noah's freshet, and away went their mill, shot, lock and barrel. I remember the water rose so high that it got up into the house we lived in, and my father moved us out of it, to keep us from being drowned.

I was now about seven or eight years old, and have a pretty distinct recollection of everything that was going on. From his bad luck in that business, and being ready to wash out from mill building, my father again removed; and this time settled in Jefferson County, now in the State of Tennessee, where he opened a tavern on the road from Abbingdon to Knoxville.

His tavern was on a small scale, as he was poor; and the principal accommodations which he kept were for the wagoners who traveled the road. Here I remained with him until I was twelve years old; and about that time, you may guess, if you belong to Yankee land, or reckon, if like me you belong to the backwoods, that I began to make up my acquaintance with hard times, and a plenty of them.

An old Dutchman, by the name of Jacob Siler, who was moving from Knox County to Rockbridge, in the State of Virginia, in passing, made a stop at my father's house. He had a large stock of cattle that he was carrying on with him, and I suppose, made some proposition to my father to hire some one to assist him.

Being hard run every way, and having no thought, as I believe, that I was cut out for a Congressman, or the like, young as I was, and as little as I knew about traveling or being from home, he hired me to the old Dutchman, to go 400 miles on foot, with a perfect stranger that I had never seen until the evening before. I set out with a heavy heart, it is true, but I went ahead until we arrived at the place, which was three miles from what is called the Natural Bridge, and made a stop at the house of a Mr. Hartley, who was father-in-law to Mr. Siler, who had hired me. My Dutch master was very kind to me, and gave me five or six dollars, being pleased, as he said, with my services.

This, however, I think was a bait for me, as he persuaded me to stay with him, and not return any more to my father. I had been taught so many lessons of obedience by my father that I at first supposed I was bound to obey this man, or at least I was afraid openly to disobey him, and I therefore stayed with him, and tried to put on a look of perfect contentment until I got the family all to believe I was fully satisfied. I had been there about four or five weeks, when one day myself and two other boys were playing on the roadside, some distance from the house. There came along three wagons.

One belonged to an old man by the name of Dunn, and the others to two of his sons. They had each of them a good team, and were all bound for Knoxville. They had been in the habit of stopping at my father's as they passed the road, and I knew them. I made myself known to the old gentleman, and informed him of my situation; I expressed a wish to get back to my father and mother, if they could fix any plan for me to do so. They told me that they would stay that night at a tavern seven miles from there, and that if I could get to them before day the next morning, they would take me home, and if I was pursued, they would protect me.

This was a Sunday evening; I went back to the good old Dutchman's house, and as good fortune would have it, he and the family were out on a visit. I gathered my clothes and what little money I had, and put them all together under the head of my bed. I went to bed early that night, but sleep seemed to be a stranger to me. For though I was a wild boy, yet I dearly loved my father and mother, and their images appeared to be so deeply fixed in my mind that I could not sleep for thinking of them. And then the fear that when I should attempt to go out, I should be discovered and called to a halt, filled me with anxiety, and between my childish love of home, on the one hand, and the fears of which I have spoken, on the other, I felt mighty queer.

But so it was, about three hours before day in the morning, I got up to make my start. When I got out, I found it was snowing fast, and that the snow was then on the ground about eight inches deep.

I had not even the advantage of moonlight, and the whole sky was hid by the falling snow, so that I had to guess at my way to the big road, which was about a half mile from the house. I, however, pushed ahead, and soon got to it, and then pursued it in the direction to the wagons.

I could not have pursued the road if I had not guided myself by the opening it made between the timber, as the snow was too deep to leave any part of it to be known by either seeing or feeling.

Before I overtook the wagons, the earth was covered about as deep as my knees, and my tracks filled so briskly after me that by daylight my Dutch master would have seen no trace which I left.

I got to the place about an hour before day. I found the wagoners already stirring, and engaged in feeding and preparing their horses for a start. Mr. Dunn took me in and treated me with great kindness. My heart was more deeply impressed by meeting with such a friend and "at such a time," than by wading the snowstorm by night, or all the other sufferings which my mind had endured. I warmed myself by the fire, for I was very cold, and after an early breakfast, we set out on our

journey. The thoughts of home now began to take the entire possession of my mind, and I almost numbered the sluggish turns of the wheels, and much more certainly the miles of our travel, which appeared to me to count mighty slow. I continued with my kind protectors until we got to the house of a Mr. John Coles, on Roanoke, when my impatience became so great that I determined to set out on foot and go ahead by myself, as I could travel twice as fast in that way as the wagons could.

Mr. Dunn seemed very sorry to part with me, and used many arguments to prevent me from leaving him. But home, poor as it was, again rushed on my memory, and it seemed ten times as dear to me as it ever had before. The reason was that my parents were there, and all that I had been accustomed to in the hours of childhood and infancy was there; and there my anxious little heart panted also to be. We remained at Mr. Coles that night, and early in the morning I felt that I could not stay; so, taking leave of my friends, the wagoners, I went forward on foot, until I was fortunately overtaken by a gentleman, who was returning from market, to which he had been with a drove of horses. He had a led horse, with a bridle and saddle on him, and he kindly offered to let me get on his horse and ride him. I did so, and was glad of the chance, for I was tired, and was, moreover, near the first crossing of Roanoke, which I would have been compelled to wade, cold as the water was, if I had not fortunately met this good man. I traveled with him in this way, without anything turning up worth recording until we got within fifteen miles of my father's house. There we parted, and he went on to Kentucky, and I trudged on homeward, which place I reached that evening. The name of this kind gentleman I have entirely forgotten, and I am sorry for it. A remembrance of his kindness to a little straggling boy, and a stranger to him, has, however, a resting place in my heart, and there it will remain as long as I live.

(David Crockett's boyhood career will be continued in next week's issue.)

A Useful Leg.

Kit Carson, the famous trapper and guide of the Far West, once told of a certain old trapper called "Peg-leg Smith," who received his sobriquet from the fact of his having a wooden leg, having lost his limb in a fight with the Crows many years before. He was a stoutly-built man with black eyes and gray hair. He was a hard drinker, and when under the influence of liquor very liable to get into trouble. When he found himself in a tight corner his wooden leg was very serviceable to him, as he had a way of taking it off quickly, and when wielded in his muscular hands it was a weapon to be dreaded. His love of whisky killed him; he died in a drunken fit in California in 1868.

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Jesse James.

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